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# HER ONLY BROTHER

[Oschrens, Bertha] BY  
W. HEIMBURG. [pseud.]

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TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN  
BY  
JEAN W. WYLIE.

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# HER ONLY BROTHER.

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## CHAPTER I.

ALL day long a severe storm had been raging, and even after day had faded into twilight, it continued in unabated fury. Directly from the North Sea, over the Lüneberg Haide, it came, and with an impetuous rush and roar dashed against the gray walls of the castle, shook the mighty elms of the garden, laid bare the roots of the plants and bushes, and snatched the last leaf left by the November frost from the already bare branches.

The black, lowering clouds cast a gloomy darkness over the quaint old castle which, for centuries past, had been the home of the family of Hegewitz. Dismal, almost spectral-like, it seemed to-day with its sharp-pointed gables, round tower, and strong buttresses supporting the walls.

Its ordinary appearance, however, was quite different; in summer it was very picturesque as it peeped out from among the green trees, its slated roof glittering in the golden sunlight, its notched gables distinctly outlined against the blue heavens, and its gray walls, framed by huge oaks, reflecting themselves in the clear waters of

the lake. To one side lay the outbuildings of the farm, and a little farther on, the village houses, whose shingled roofs protruded here and there from among the foliage of the fruit trees. Far beyond, in the Brandenb $\ddot{u}$ rger Land, the eye could wander over waving cornfields, green pastures and cheerful meadows of red and purple heather, bordered by a dark strip of Scotch firs. Stretching from the north, almost to the castle garden, was a small pine forest whose fragrance on a summer's day perfumed the whole house.

The interior represented the home of a genuine old M $\ddot{a}$ rkish nobleman. There were gloomy corridors, deep recesses, great arched rooms, immense alcoves, winding staircases with time-worn steps, and wonderfully low-arched doors. A never-to-be-suspected pair of steps led from one room into another, and if one attempted to make his exit by the door directly opposite, he found himself suddenly in an immense closet. There were cemented floors, strong beams supporting the roof, and window panes of the tiniest kind imaginable, yet a more cosy and inviting place than this old-fashioned home could not be found. What if the November storm did howl without? Within, great pine logs crackled on the cheerful hearth!

Just at twilight an elderly lady came down the wide staircase leading from the upper story. In her dainty little cap, with a silk shawl thrown gracefully over her shoulders, and a knitting bag of green silk hanging from her arm, she was the very picture of placid happi-

ness. Fräulein Rosamunde von Hegewitz was blessed with a cheerful and contented disposition. Her form was petite, and her age apparently about sixty years. Having been afflicted with lameness all her life, she walked with a noticeable limp, but nevertheless, stepped along briskly. She turned to the left and went through the small corridor, to make her usual evening call on her niece. This was a loving old custom which had been introduced when the children were small, while her brother and sister-in-law were still living; the twilight hours were lonely ones to her, and she preferred not to pass them in the solitude of her own chamber.

She was just placing her hand on the door knob, when in the dim hall light she noticed a girl whose coarse linen apron was thrown over her face; she was sobbing pitifully, and seemed so distressed that the old lady turned back and asked kindly, "Why are you weeping, Marieken?"

The curly brown head was quickly raised, revealing the tear-stained, blushing face of the girl, who looked up at Fräulein Rosamunde and stammeringly answered, "Oh gracious Fräulein, I must leave, and I" —

"Why, what have you been doing?" The old lady went no farther, for at that moment the door opened and the sharp, ringing voice of a young girl was heard:

"I will have nothing more to say, Mrs. Märtensen, I cannot permit such things here; she should be thankful that I have put an end to her nonsense in time. Just think of Louise Keller!"

“Good heavens! gracious Fräulein,” said Mrs. Märtensen apologetically, “the girl hasn’t done anything bad and he is a respectable fellow; when one is young one should feel” —

“Shame on you, Mrs. Märtensen,” was the passionate reply, “you know what I have said. Take your Marieken and go; such frivolous girls can have no place in my house.”

Then the door opened wide and an old woman, whose wrinkled face was flushed with excitement, came out, and without any salutation to the old lady, took her daughter by the arm and drew her away, murmuring in an undertone, “Never mind, she’ll catch it some day— sending her off as though she had stolen something!”

Rosamunde von Hegewitz turned slowly towards the door, with an earnest, half-scornful smile on her wise old face.

“*Bon soir*, Anna Marie,” she said, as she entered the cheerfully lighted sitting-room. A young lady rose from a stool in front of a massive old secretary, and advancing to greet her visitor with that etiquette, which, at the beginning of this century had not yet disappeared from the circle of noble German families, raised the proffered hand respectfully to her lips, saying courteously: “Good evening, aunt, how are you?”

It was the same clear, cold voice that had been heard a few minutes before, and which only a nature such as hers could possess. Anna Marie von Hegewitz was in her nineteenth summer, and the bloom of youth added

many a charm to the slender figure and rosy countenance of the fair-haired maiden; a pair of dark grey eyes looked out from under her pure white brow, with an intense earnestness and longing not often seen in a youthful face, while the pronounced lines around her mouth, gave her a striking expression of authority and decision.

“Thank you, *ma chère*, I am quite well,” responded the old lady, seating herself by the round table, upon which, in shining brass candlesticks, four candles were burning brightly. “Do not let me disturb you, *ma mignonne*, I see you have been writing. Is it to Klaus?”

“I have only been looking over the account of this week’s corn sales, aunt, and shall be disengaged presently; I shall not write Klaus again, he will be home not later than day after to-morrow. If you will excuse me for a moment” —

“Certainly dear, in the meantime I will not be idle,” and drawing the yarn from her silk bag the old lady began to work, while, with a dreamy look, her eyes wandered through the large, though cosy and homelike room. It carried her back to the days of her youth: every object was familiar, nothing having been altered since that time; the same high-backed chairs surrounded the table, the same artistic cabinet adorned the wall; even the dark, embossed paper remained unchanged, and the old rococo clock still uttered its rapid, monotonous tick-tick, as if it could not make the time go half fast enough. There by the same old table at which her young niece was now sitting, her only brother had fig-

ured his accounts and written his letters, and that sewing table by the window had been the favorite seat of her loved sister-in-law, who so early in life had been called to her eternal rest. How totally unlike were mother and daughter!

Once more the old lady looked towards Anna Marie. The girl's lips were moving and her slender hand guided the pen slowly up and down the long columns of figures as she said, in a half audible tone, "Makes 575 *Thaler* and 23 *Groschen*. Correct!"

"Now, Aunt Rosamunde, I am at your service." She extinguished the light, closed the desk, and bringing a dainty spinning-wheel from the corner, sat down beside her aunt; soon the wheel was buzzing merrily and with a masterly hand the delicate fingers separated the silken threads of the flax. For a time all was quiet, only the howling of the storm and the crackling of the burning logs broke the stillness.

"Anna Marie," said the old lady at length, "you know I never interfere with your arrangements, but will you pardon me if I ask why you are dismissing Marieken?"

"She has commenced a flirtation with Gottlieb," replied Anna Marie curtly.

"I am sorry, Anna Marie. Marieken has always been very proud of her good name. Have you not been a little too severe?"

"She gives him his supper secretly, and walks around the garden with him late at night. I will have no such



goings-on in my house, and I know, too, that Klaus would not approve of it." The words seemed unlike those of a young girl.

"Yes, Anna Marie," said Rosamunde von Hegewitz smiling, "if you look at it in that way, but these people do not regard such matters in the same light that we do. I think you can have no reason for supposing that his intentions are not perfectly honest."

"That does not alter my opinion in the least. How it will end I cannot tell, but the girl shall not remain here. Do you not agree with me, dear aunt?"

With a hearty laugh the old lady replied, "It is easy to see you have never been in love, or you would not attempt to lay down such rules and regulations for others."

"And I do not wish to be!" she exclaimed, almost disdainfully.

"But, darling," said the old lady, in a voice betraying the deepest emotion, "do you expect things to remain always as they are now? Remember, you are eighteen years old; do you think your heart will never be touched by other than a brother's love, and that Klaus will always be satisfied with only a sister's affection? He is still young."

The little foot stood motionless on the treadle, and the grey eyes looked in amazement at the speaker. "Do you not know, aunt, it was settled long ago that Klaus and I were always to remain together? Did he not solemnly promise our mother on her deathbed that he

would never leave me? — and I leave Klaus! Oh, that would be out of the question, it would be utterly impossible! Do not mention such a thing, Aunt Rosamunde, it is ludicrous to think of it.”

“Pardon me, Anna Marie,” the words came almost solemnly, “I was present when your brother gave that promise to your dying mother; but that mother never intended to throw any obstacle in the way of her son’s loving another than his sister, and marrying the woman his heart might choose.”

“Aunt Rosamunde!” cried the girl, almost threateningly.

“No, no, my child, I repeat it, your mother was far too good, too just, to wish such a thing; she was far too happy in her own marriage to subject her children — but — dear, oh dear! why am I so needlessly excited — you have entirely mistaken the meaning of that promise.”

“It was Klaus himself who told me so, Aunt Rosamunde,” explained the maiden, in a tone which rendered all opposition impossible, and Aunt Rosamunde wisely refrained from further discussion of the subject, knowing argument would be fruitless, and that nothing could convince Anna Marie of the existence of any object, except her brother, worthy of her love. “*Nous verrons, ma petite,*” she thought, “you feel so now, but you too will learn by experience.”

Then her thoughts reverted to the past; to the night when Anna Marie was born:—a fearful night followed by

a more fearful day. In the clumsy, old-fashioned cradle, bearing the Hegewitz coat-of-arms, slumbered the newborn babe; near by lay the mother, whose eyes were also closed in sleep, — that sleep which knows no waking; only a few minutes before her soul had winged its flight to the spirit land, she had gazed with loving longing and anxiety upon that darling babe, which all its life long must be deprived of that priceless inheritance, a mother's love. By her bedside had knelt a boy of some fifteen summers, reverently listening to his mother's pleading prayer that he would always love and protect his little sister. This promise so urgently claimed had been solemnly given, and the dying mother had then tenderly kissed and blessed her son.

How often Aunt Rosamunde had related this to the children; how often painted for them the picture of that baptism by the mother's coffin, when the brother had held the babe in his arms, and, weeping bitterly, pressed its little form close to his breast; truly, yes truly, there were not many brothers like Klaus von Hegewitz, and no one realized it more fully than Aunt Rosamunde herself.

She remembered how more than once through the long hours of the night, he had watched by the child's sick bed; how, with unceasing patience, he had humored her every whim and fancy — and indeed did so to-day — how carefully he had chosen her teachers, what interest he had shown in her instruction, how he had not only selected for her the choicest reading, but had read

with her himself, played with her, ridden with her, and more, much more than she could say; in short, had cared for her in every way that the most tender mother-love could have prompted. Anna Marie scarcely knew what a parent's love was. Her father had always been eccentric, and after the death of his wife his eccentricities increased; it almost appeared as if he had no real affection for the child whose life had been purchased with the mother's. He was seldom at home; one half of the year he passed in Berlin, and only in the sporting season returned to his family and domestic life. He never came alone, but was always accompanied by Baron Stürmer, lord of the adjacent manor of Dambitz, a young man some two years older than Klaus.

The friendship between these two men was remarkable. Hegewitz, well advanced in the sixties, melancholy and unsociable, mistrusting every one, even avoiding the society of his own children, could be approached only by Stürmer. At this moment, Aunt Rosamunde could distinctly see his pale, noble countenance, luminous brown eyes and dark hair. How thankfully she thought of him, and of the strange influence he had wielded over the whole family. He had been the only one who understood how to smooth over difficulties which sometimes arose between father and son, the only one who had been able again and again to calm the defiant little maiden, and lead her back in reconciliation to her father. They had played chess far into the small hours of the night, had ridden and hunted together, but there was

one bond which united them even more closely, — both were collectors of relics and antiques.

Through all the surrounding country they had searched for carved chests, old timepieces, porcelains and paintings. Night after night they had been known to discuss the merits of some “auction” picture, entering into lively disputes as to whether it was a copy or some valuable original; they had often spent days seeking such treasures, which, when found, were artistically placed in one of the tower rooms reserved for such purposes. “A genuine curiosity shop,” Aunt Rosamunde had once rather scornfully remarked, “I wonder they have not tried to scure me for their collection.” All these valuables had been bequeathed to Baron Stürmer, because (it was added in the will) Klaus had never shown any taste for antiques. Stürmer accepted the bequest, but had it appraised by a connoisseur, and insisted on paying to the heirs, the value in full. Klaus von Hegewitz declined to accept the sum, and they mutually agreed to erect therewith a home for the worthy poor of the two villages of Bütze and Dambitz.

Ten years had come and gone since this had taken place, and the ardent love of the old lord for collecting curiosities had borne good fruit.

Soon after the death, Baron Stürmer started on an extended tour; he had long cherished a desire to travel, and only his old friend’s entreaties had caused him to postpone the execution of this darling wish. His first points were Italy, Constantinople, and Greece; he had

visited Egypt, travelled through South America, Sweden, and Norway, and seen the principal objects of interest in Russia and the valleys of the Caucasus. No one knew just where he was at present. During the year he had written but seldom, and in the last few months had not been heard from at all, yet his memory was kept fresh in Bütze. Anna Marie, however, had ceased to mention him; her remembrance of him was very faint, as she was but eight years of age when he bade farewell to his native place and turned his face eastward. One thing, however, which had made an impression on her childish mind was the way in which Uncle Stürmer had so often taken her by the hand and led her to her father, and how on such occasions her heart had beaten faster than usual. Anna Marie had always felt a certain shyness or reserve in her father's presence, and sometimes her feelings were almost those of fear; at his death and burial not a single tear had moistened her eye. Her whole heart belonged to her brother, her only brother as, in her love and pride, she was accustomed to call him.

Aunt Rosamunde had never exerted the slightest influence in moulding the character of this independent girl.

Immediately after her confirmation, she had assumed all household responsibilities. With the keys suspended from her waist, she attended to her daily round of duties with a prudence and energy that awakened wonder in all, but especially in her old aunt, who her-



self had always been such a gentle, dependent creature that she could not comprehend how one of her sex could show so much firmness, decision, and executive ability.

While these thoughts were rushing through the mind of her companion, Anna Marie had continued quietly spinning. She could sit an entire evening at such work without speaking a word. She was totally different from other girls; she would not tolerate birds or plants in her room and never adorned her person with flowers or jewelry; yet she was charming in her simplicity. Even in her ordinary house dress, or on formal occasions, when receiving guests in her parlor, she was not less attractive than others; on the contrary, rather cast them in the shade. Aunt Rosamunde herself was sometimes forced to admit that, for real worth, they could not compare with her niece; but "how will it all end," she said with a sigh.

"A letter for you, gnädiges Fräulein," and a youth of some twenty-five years, in plain dark livery, handed an epistle to Anna Marie.

"From Klaus," she cried joyously, but noticing the pale, determined face of the servant, held it in her hand unopened and asked, "What is wrong with you, Gottlieb? You look as though your whole crop of wheat had been destroyed by the hail."

"Gnädiges Fräulein," he replied, hesitatingly but firmly, "Mr. Klaus must look for another servant to take my place, I shall leave at New Year's."

"Are you crazy?" asked Anna Marie, knitting her

brows. "What does not suit you here?" She had risen and stepped toward him, "I think I know why you have taken such a foolish whim into your head; I suppose you are going because I have discharged Marieken. Well, I am satisfied, I will not prevent you; there are plenty of others who would be glad to have your place; you may go; but if your father knew it he would turn in his grave. Do you know how long he was servant at Bütze?"

"Fifty-eight years, gnädiges Fräulein," answered the youth.

"Yes, fifty-eight years; and you, for the sake of a silly girl, will give up the position in which he grew old? Well, you shall have your way, but remember, whoever leaves the service of Hegewitz, never returns."

His face flushed as he listened to the upbraiding words of his young mistress, and turning slowly to the door he left the room.

In the meanwhile, Anna Marie broke the seal of her letter and after reading a few lines said, merrily as a child, "Klaus comes day after to-morrow, and only listen, Aunt Rosamunde, to what else he says; I will read it to you, —

"I found my old friend Mattoni busy as usual, poring over his books, but he did not look well; when I questioned him, however, he declared there was nothing wrong with him, that he was enjoying good health. I proposed he should rusticate with us next summer and breathe the invigorating country air. He shook his head, giving the usual excuse, 'I have no time.' He is an inveterate bookworm.



“But I have something still more interesting to tell you. Do you know whom I met yesterday in the street *Unter den Linden*, so brown and sunburnt that I scarcely recognized him? Edwin Stürmer! He was looking at some pictures in a window. We stood beside each other some time (having no idea of our close proximity) admiring some of Henselt’s newest water colors. Suddenly I felt a gentle touch on my arm, and a familiar voice exclaimed, ‘Klaus, if you hadn’t covered your face with that handsome beard, I’d have recognized you sooner.’ I was delighted to see him and am anticipating our next meeting with great pleasure. At last the old fellow is going to settle down and enjoy the sweets of domestic life. He is coming to Dambitz in a few days, so we shall soon have our good friend once more in our immediate neighborhood. He cannot realize that you have grown to be a young lady, have doffed short dresses, dispensed with long plaits, and donned a woman’s attire.”

She held the letter listlessly in her hand, and with a far away look in her eyes said, —

“I cannot remember exactly how he looked; did he not wear a heavy black beard, aunt, and is he not rather elderly by this time?”

“O no, *mon cœur*, he cannot be more than thirty-five.”

“Why, that is quite old, Aunt Rosamunde!”

“Young people may consider it so,” she said laughingly.

“And why shouldn’t they?” asked Anna Marie, putting the letter in her pocket and resuming her spinning.

At that moment an old woman wearing a snowy white apron entered the room. “Gnädiges Fräulein,” she began, respectfully yet confidingly, “Marieken has gone, and there has been great lamentation over her in the

house. Weaver Bush's oldest daughter is downstairs and would like to have her place, but she wants twelve *Thaler* wages, and a jacket at Christmas."

"She can have ten *Thaler*, and at Christmas just what she deserves" answered Anna Marie, without looking up.

The housekeeper disappeared, to return in a few moments.

"Gnädiges Fräulein, she will come for eleven *Thaler* and a jacket, and, she declares, for nothing less; you might give her that, she has no beau and will have hard work to catch one for she is pretty well on in years and" —

Anna Marie took her purse from her pocket and laying a piece of money on the table said, "There, conclude the bargain, Mrs. Brockelmann. Have you heard that Gottlieb is going?"

The old woman appeared embarrassed, but replied, —

"Yes, gnädiges Fräulein, I am sorry he dotes on her so, but after all, miss, we were all young once, and when people fall in love, you see, it is just as though they had taken some magic drink; but I mean no offence, you will understand it some day, and if God sees best, I hope he will send the handsomest and kindest man in the world to Bütze to love you, and take you to be the light of his home."

The woman had spoken with much feeling, gazing tenderly and admiringly on her young mistress.

No one else would have dared to broach the subject, but she had long been Anna Marie's waiting-maid, and

the girl cherished in her heart a feeling of affectionate tenderness for her.

“Mrs. Brockelmann, why must you always have something to say? You know I shall never marry.” Then she added cheerfully, “What would Mr. Klaus do without me? Is supper ready?”

“*Mr. Klaus,*” responded the trim-looking housekeeper, paying no attention to the last query, “*he* should marry too; why yes, and its high time, he will be thirty-three years old next Martin’s day.”

## CHAPTER II.

A FEW days later, Edwin Stürmer, for the first time since his return, paid a visit to his friends in Bütze. Anna Marie stood on the lower steps of the staircase, leading into the gayly tiled front hall, swinging a basket of shining red apples on her arm; near by was the old housekeeper, Mrs. Brockelmann, holding a lighted candle, whose flickering flame threw a dull, unglimly glimmer over the surrounding objects, and gave to the head and face of the fair maiden the appearance of an old Rembrandt picture. All around was bustle and merry confusion; the entire youth of the village had assembled and were singing in unmusically loud, monotonous tones, the old Martin's melody, —

“ O little bird Martin with golden wings,  
That sweeter far than all others sings,  
Fly over the Rhine, away, away,  
To-morrow will be St. Martin's day.

“ Then they will kill a good fat swine,  
And have sausage cakes to eat with their wine.  
Marieken ! Marieken ! open the door  
Which the waiting youngsters are standing before.  
Simmerling, Simmerling — leaf of the rose,  
Pretty maiden, pity our woes !”

They had already sung this several times, and were just about repeating it, when the heavy doors of the

front hall suddenly opened, and Edwin Stürmer entered. His appearance was unnoticed by Anna Marie, who was absorbed in her part of the day's celebration; this, according to the old-time custom, consisted in throwing apples right and left among the merry groups of children, each of whom, jubilant and exulting, scrambled to obtain a Benjamin's portion. Turning she found, standing directly before her, a stranger, whose pale face was surrounded by dark hair and beard, and illuminated by a pair of sparkling bright eyes.

She was slightly startled, and a flush of surprise swept over her cheeks as she extended her hand and bade him welcome; but the cold dignity of her manner and the precise severity of her voice, were in striking contrast with her youthful appearance.

"Silence!" she cried in a peremptory tone to the noisy boys and girls, and in the ensuing stillness added, "You have found me engaged in a very important business, Herr von Stürmer, but I shall soon be at leisure; in the meantime, will you not go up and see Klaus?"

He made no reply, but still holding her hand gazed intently at her, as if he had not understood her remark. With secret impatience she drew her hand out of his, saying, "Mrs. Brockelmann, set the light down and show the gentleman to my brother's room." Then, recollecting herself, she showered the contents of the basket among the children (who gave expression to their increased mirth in a most hilarious manner), meanwhile closely observing the man, who, in her childhood, had so

often held her in his arms, and so frequently spoken a friendly word in her behalf.

Yes, he was here again; the same slender, erect form; those glittering brown eyes shed a lustre as of old over his pale face, and yet how different.

Anna Marie secretly admitted he was handsome;—and old? she laughed; children see such things in a very different light from adults, it seemed as if years had been effaced, and he had come up as of yore to lay hold of her tresses and say, “Don’t run away, Anna Marie.”

Side by side they ascended the stairs, their footsteps reverberating through the hall.

Truly it seemed to her as if she was enjoying anew the halcyon days of childhood, that sweet innocent childhood, with its thousand precious memories. Unconsciously she extended her slender hand, which he seized, compelling her to stand still. The shouting of the village children was now heard but faintly, and no one, save themselves, was in the dimly lighted hall.

Words expressive of her joy at seeing again the friend of her childhood hovered on her lips; but just as she was about to give them utterance, her eyes met his, and speech failed her. Still gazing in her upturned face, he raised her hand slowly to his lips; she was passive as in a dream, but suddenly awaking, she snatched it away.

“What do you mean?” she inquired, in a half earnest, half playful tone. “I gave you my hand because I was

glad to meet again the uncle of my early days; and an uncle" —

"May not kiss his niece's hand?" he queried, a smile playing over his countenance; but it was lost on Anna Marie, for she had stepped into the still unlighted sitting-room, exclaiming, "Company, Klaus, company!"

"Ah!" a man's voice immediately responded, "Stürmer, is it you? Welcome, thrice welcome; we were sitting here enjoying the twilight, talking of you and old times; were we not, Aunt Rose?"

They greeted each other in the heartiest manner, an invitation to supper was given and accepted, and Klaus rang for lights.

"Oh, let us wait in the gloaming a little longer!" urged Aunt Rosamunde; "who knows what the light may reveal? Time may have wrought many changes; it seems as if it were only yesterday, *chère* baron, that you sat here, and yet" —

"It is ten years, Stürmer," interrupted Klaus.

"Yes, ten years," assented Stürmer.

"What happy times those were!" the old lady rambled on. "Have you forgotten our memorable sleigh ride, baron, the day you (quite accidentally of course) upset the sleigh, and laid us both prostrate in the snow? I had on my best dress, you know, my green brocade that you always called my poll-parrot costume."

Klaus laughed heartily. "*A propos*, Stürmer," he asked, "have you spoken with Anna Marie yet?"

“Yes, I had that honor in the hall below,” answered the baron.

“The honor! My, how formal! Did you hear that, my love?” asked her brother. But there was no answer. “Anna Marie,” he called.

“She is not here,” said Aunt Rosamunde, groping her way through the room and adding, as she passed out, “it’s very dark here.”

“Why have you never married, Hegewitz?” Baron Stürmer asked, abruptly.

“I might reply by asking you the same question,” retorted Klaus; “but let us say no more about it at present, Stürmer; I will tell you why another time.” Klaus von Hegewitz had risen and walked to the window; for a time all was quiet; not a sound broke the stillness. Stürmer perhaps, regretted having introduced a theme which had evidently aroused painful recollections. At length, referring again to the subject, Klaus continued, —

“Every one has some such experiences, Stürmer. Why should I be spared? but it’s all in the past now, and I try to think no more about it. Won’t you have another cigar?”

“You think no more about it,” rejoined the baron, disregarding the last question, and laughing audibly, — “and only thirty-four years old! What will become of you, dearest Klaus, when Aunt Rosamunde dies and Anna Marie marries?”

“Anna Marie! I had never so much as given that a



thought, Stürmer; she is young yet, and if she does — I know such things will happen in life, — somehow you bring it right home.” Klaus seemed uneasy.

The baron with much tact turned the conversation to agricultural subjects, and their discussion as to the merits of different kinds of fodder lasted until dinner was announced.

In the mean while, Aunt Rosamunde had gone the whole length of the corridor and knocked on a door at the end of the passage. “Come in;” the voice was Anna Marie’s. She, too, had been sitting in the twilight, but rose quickly to make a light. Noticing her pale face, Aunt Rosamunde asked, anxiously, —

“Are you sick, Anna Marie?”

“Not exactly sick, but suffering with headache.”

“You have taken cold. Why do you expose yourself to these sharp, bitter winds? Klaus and you are both very imprudent to ride out so much at this season of the year. Let me feel your pulse; just as I thought, it’s fairly galloping; you must go to bed.”

“I cannot now, aunt. What would Klaus say if I failed to appear at supper?”

“But you are really ill, Anna Marie.”

The girl laughed, took the keys in her hand, and urged her aunt to accompany her. “Do not worry about me, and, above all things, do not tell Klaus, he will imagine me far worse than I am.”

“Klaus, it is nothing but Klaus, *incroyable!*” murmured the old lady. . . .

“That was an interesting gathering at the table this evening!” said Klaus von Hegewitz, coming into the sitting-room, after seeing Stürmer off. “You, Anna Marie, had not a word to say, and the conversation with Stürmer dragged so miserably I was afraid each minute would be its last; if Aunt Rose hadn’t come to the rescue, it certainly would have died out, yes, really it *was* remarkable; how much more pleasant and home-like it is when we are by ourselves, is it not, little sister?” He stepped up, put his arms around her waist, and gazed lovingly in her face as she stood dreamily by the table, looking towards the window, as if to catch the last sound of the carriage wheels dying away in the distance.

Brother and sister resembled each other closely; there was a striking similarity between their features, the same expression of intense earnestness in both faces; only, in Klaus’s eye, there was a heart-winning kindness, and the severe lines around his mouth were overshadowed by a handsome full beard.

“Yes,” she answered, passively.

“Now tell me, darling sister, why were you so — what shall I call it? — so cold, almost frigid, with Stürmer?”

Anna Marie looked away from her brother, and was silent.

“Come, out with it!” he said, jocosely. “Did Stürmer not treat you enough like a young lady? Or” —

“Well, Klaus, I will try to explain,” she said with a blush; “memories of the past rose before us and spoke

louder than our words; recollections of my childhood passed through my mind, and" — she stopped suddenly and gazed up at him with a distressed look, but one full of unspeakable gratitude. Klaus drew her to him, and, with his strong manly hand, pressed the fair head to his breast.

"My old girl is not going to cry," he said, tenderly; and he too, seemed deeply affected.

She took his hand, and kissing it, said softly, "Klaus, dear Klaus, I have just been thinking how different it would have been if you had not loved me so very, very devotedly."

Klaus von Hegewitz made no reply, but looked musingly down upon her.

"It would have made a great difference, truly; whether it is better thus, who can tell? But yes, all has been ordered for the best."

She looked up in surprise at his calm, earnest words. He drew his hand meditatively over his forehead, embraced his sister once more, and turning slowly to a shelf in the corner took down from it his favorite pipe.

"Come, Anna Marie, cheer up! *Tante Voss*\* is very interesting to-day."

Anna Marie stood for a long time at her bedroom window, gazing at the ever-changing clouds which darkened, though they beautified, the heavens. Sometimes

\* A Berlin newspaper.

the moon peeped from behind the dusky surface, illuminating with a silvery radiance their dainty edges, as they glided swiftly over her bright disk; wonderfully varied and fantastic were these graceful cloud pictures, but Anna Marie saw them not. Confused thoughts chased one another rapidly through her brain; thoughts as broken and disconnected as those clouds above; but now and then, even as yon twinkling star seemed to burst from the surrounding darkness, so a ray of light from her soul shed its brightness over her troubled countenance, and put new life into the saddened eyes. "I am thinking of my childhood," she whispered, "of my happy, vanished childhood."

From the neighboring church tower the midnight hour sounded in solemn tones, as, shivering with cold, she turned from the window. Down the corridor came a firm, quick tread, in which, as it approached, she recognized the step of Mrs. Brockelmann, who was on her way to her room to prepare for her night's rest. Thoughtlessly, almost involuntarily, she opened the door and the old woman crossed the threshold.

"You are not asleep, gnädiges Fräulein? Ah! well; I am glad you are still awake. I have just had a dreadful fright—what do you think? Marieken Märtensen tried to drown herself, but a man from the village dragged her out of the pond."

Anna Marie's face had grown ashy pale, and she was obliged to support herself on the edge of her bed; with an expression of horrified amazement she looked over

to Mrs. Brockelmann, saying hastily, almost harshly, "Why, what led her to take such a step as that?"

"For no other reason that I can imagine, than on account of that wretched story about Gottlieb. Her own people cannot afford to keep her, they have too many mouths to feed already, and you know what kind of a woman his mother is. I suppose when he took Marieken to his home, she told him he could bring no girl you had dismissed, to that house, and that as long as she lived he mustn't even think of marrying her. You know yourself, gnädiges Fräulein, the old woman almost swears by the Hegewitz family, and the foolish girl took it so much to heart, that she threw herself into the water."

Anna Marie looked blankly around, her whole frame quivering with emotion.

"Mercy! you are sick," cried Mrs. Brockelmann.

"No, no!" protested the girl, "I am not sick; leave me, only leave me alone. I am weary and want to sleep."

Mrs. Brockelmann shook her head in doubt and perplexity, and went to her room muttering, "Dear me! I thought it would make her sorry, but I never dreamed" — she sighed, and closed her door. Towards morning the violent ringing of the bell in her chamber roused her from slumber.

"Anna Marie!" she cried, "she must be sick." She always thought of her young mistress by the name she had been accustomed to call her in her childhood. Has-

tily throwing something around her, she hurried through the chilly hall, in which glimpses of the approaching dawn were already visible. Anna Marie sat erect in bed; on the table by her side stood a burning candle, which she extinguished as Mrs. Brockelmann entered, but not, however, before the old woman's sharp eyes had noticed traces of tears upon her cheek.

"Mrs. Brockelmann," she exclaimed, in a voice and manner far less imperious than usual, "as soon as it is light send for Gottlieb's mother, I want to speak to her about Marieken." The housekeeper commenced a reply, but Anna Marie interrupted her. "You may go now, I am very tired."

### CHAPTER III.

“How quickly time flies! One can scarcely realize where it goes. Even in my solitude the days seem short. Another winter is past, and the starlings have returned from their sunny homes in the South. It is wonderful!”

Thus soliloquized Aunt Rosamunde as she stood by the window of her room, watching the tiny winged harbingers of spring as they flitted past and disappeared in the small wooden houses built for them in the surrounding trees. It was not a bright, sunny spring day; heavy gray clouds overcast the firmament, and a warm sultry wind shook the budding branches unmercifully, as though determined to hasten them into full growth.

A chequered sky had no charm for the genial old lady, who preferred looking on the bright side of everything. She had never been able to wander far away from home, but the view from her window was dear to her heart; the sunlight, the blue heavens, the meadows shining in their spring verdure, the oaks covered with tender young leaves, and, in fact, the whole visible stretch of land, formed in her eyes an enchanting picture.

“If it were always May or September,” she used to say, “this would be the most beautiful country in the



world; the curtains should be drawn all winter, to exclude the outside gloom; who cares for a landscape that's nothing but brown and gray? such a prospect depresses one."

Turning from the cheerless outlook, she limped quickly through the room, arranging, as was her habit, the various ornaments, and obliterating all traces of disorder; she adjusted the sconces on the spinet, plucked a withered leaf from the plants on the flower-stand, and smoothed out the creases in the canopy of the large bed which so pretentiously occupied one side of the room. (Aunt Rosamunde, not inaptly, called this her throne, as she was obliged to ascend a pair of carpeted steps in order to reach it. Although its heavy crimson silk hangings were somewhat faded, and its gilt tassels slightly tarnished, it still presented an appearance of luxury and elegance.) Then she straightened a picture that inclined to one side, a proceeding she often found necessary, for the high walls were well-nigh covered with pictures, mostly portraits in oil or pastels. She knew the history of each and every one; these men and women whose faces now gazed so peacefully upon her had been her personal friends, and marvellous were the tales she sometimes told regarding the life of these companions of her youth.

Directly over the card table hung an oval pastel of a man with powdered wig and old-fashioned blue silk coat. Aunt Rosamunde's accurate eye detected that it was slightly awry, and she moved it gently to the right, but



owing to the giving way of the cord, or the loosening of the nail, it fell, and in falling turned towards the wall.

"Never mind, aunt! don't touch it," called a familiar voice, and before the old lady had time to collect her thoughts, Anna Marie had raised the picture and handed it to her.

"*Merci, ma petite!*" gracefully responded Aunt Rosamunde, "if I could not find spring without, it has surely entered my room now."

Anna Marie wore a dark blue riding habit, the close-fitting basque and long drapery of which displayed her beautiful form to advantage, while her rosy face, fresh as spring itself, cheered the heart of her aunt.

"Have you been riding, Anna Marie? queried the old lady.

"Yes, aunt, I have been riding with Klaus for an hour on the Dambitz road," replied the girl, still searching for the lost nail. "We unexpectedly met Baron Stürmer, who insisted upon taking us home with him for a cup of coffee."

"Yes," said Aunt Rosamunde with apparent indifference, but at the same time closely scanning the now blushing face of her niece, who was examining with seeming interest the nail she had just picked up.

"I suppose by this time the snow-bells are in bloom at Dambitz," inquired the old lady. "But why are you standing? If you don't take a seat I cannot sleep, as

Mrs. Brockelmann would say.\* You can give me a few minutes — *n'est ce pas, mon cœur?* ”

Anna Marie stood for a moment undecided, looking over at Aunt Rosamunde, who, already seated on the high-backed sofa, was motioning her to take the arm-chair. The room presented a cosy, comfortable appearance. The rococo clock, crowned by a well-equipped Cupid, sounded its gentle tick-tick. A thunder shower had suddenly sprung up, and the rain dashed and splashed against the windows in rythmical patter; the hour seemed peculiarly appropriate for a loving talk, over events of the past, present, and future; everything invited a confidential chat.

Hesitatingly, Anna Marie accepted the offered chair; as usual, however, she did not recline gracefully or lean back comfortably in it, but sat erect as a statue, the color coming and going on her cheeks, as, with maidenly coyness and shyness she fastened her eyes on the face of the old lady; one could easily see she had something to say, something to tell, but the natural reserve of her character was struggling with the fulness of her heart.

Her *vis-à-vis* appeared to notice nothing of all this; she had taken up a book, whose green velvet binding had lost its former freshness and beauty and gave marked evidence of old age. The delicate fingers turned leaf after leaf, then, glancing at the contents of one page, she paused and said, —

\* It is a saying among the Germans, that if a visitor drops in for a moment, and refuses to take a seat, the one who is visited will lose his rest and sleep.

“Wasn't it strange, Anna Marie, that Felix Leonhard's picture should fall to-day? you know this is the anniversary of his birthday. Some people would call it chance, but to me it is remarkable; generally I remember these anniversaries, but this one escaped my memory; and yet, I have been wandering round all day long with a strange feeling of unrest, a half consciousness that I had forgotten something which, notwithstanding all my efforts, I could not remember. Then suddenly, in a rather startling manner, he announced his own presence. My poor Felix. You shall have your flowers to-day, as in bygone years.” She tenderly touched the picture which lay on the table before her and almost shyly looked across at Anna Marie, for she knew full well, her niece's estimation of presentiments and their interpretations.

However, the dreaded expression round her finely formed mouth, was not visible to-day; she looked thoughtfully at the picture for a moment, then asked, —

“Who was Felix Leonhard, aunt?”

“One of my brother's dearest friends,” responded the old lady.

“Was he the one whose unfortunate love story you told me, who shot himself because he was disappointed by some young girl?”

“Yes, you are right, my child. This handsome, fascinating fellow, for the sake of a foolish girl, seized a pistol and put an end to his existence. He was not very young either; he was almost thirty, yet he committed

this cruel, wicked deed, unworthy of one in possession of his reason. Oh, the circumstances were inexpressibly sad!" She shook her head and drew her hand over her eyes, as if to shut out the horrible picture.

"Why did he do it, aunt?" queried the girl, with unusual warmth in her tone. "Had she proved false to him?"

"She never loved him, *ma petite*, but her family had persuaded her to engage herself to him. He was in excellent circumstances, had bright prospects, and was one of the kindest men I ever knew; he became acquainted with her at a ball in Berlin, and, although previous to that time no one would have accused him of being susceptible, he fell desperately in love with her; she was no silly schoolgirl, but was about twenty-five or six years of age; not strikingly pretty, and with the exception of a pair of large, pensive gray eyes, possessed no special charm. *Eh bien!* after endless struggles and doubts she listened to his entreaties and became his *fiancée*; during the whole year of their apparently happy engagement, she was as bashful and retiring a betrothed as one could find; he, on the contrary, was very demonstrative, and paid her the most delicate and touching attentions; indeed, his main object in life seemed to be to add to her happiness; but the nearer the wedding approached, the more terrible became the poor girl's state of mind. Repeatedly she had inquired of different persons if they believed she could make her betrothed happy; her friends made light of the ques-

tion, while her brothers and sisters expressed decided disapproval of her doubts. At last, on the wedding day, just half an hour before the marriage ceremony was to take place, the pale trembling girl declared she must recall her promise to be his bride; she could not make a false vow and swear she loved one whom her heart told her she did not; she didn't wish to make him unhappy. Oh, I can never forget that day! the amazed countenances of the guests, as the strange news began to spread among them, and the violent rage of her brother; What she herself experienced in her own chamber, the world never knew. I know only, that she abode by her decision, and that on the evening of the same day he shot himself in the garden. *Voilà tout!*"

Anna Marie spoke not a word during this recital, but every trace of color faded from her face. After a pause she inquired, —

"What became of her, aunt?"

"She — oh — she lived, and, before very long, married; she had not loved him, Anna Marie. Who can understand his own heart?"

For a moment it seemed as if the girl wished to reply, but she closed her lips firmly and all was quiet in the room; she had leaned back trembling with emotion, and fastened her eyes on the picture before her. The rain beat with increased fury against the window, the wind chased the large snowflakes, as in a wild dance; after such April weather, wrestling and struggling, storms and tumults, spring must come.

The old lady reclined comfortably on the sofa, gazing into the storm without, and thinking how every human heart must, at some time, experience such violent, tumultuous tempests, how scarcely any one was spared this inward struggling and wrestling. She, although only a frail, crippled woman, could speak from experience; frequently, too, she had seen these stormy passions raging in the bosoms of others, and in her feeble way had helped to assuage their fury. Many a time had the roar and the tumult given place to a balmy and beautiful spring, beautiful as one sometimes sees in a dream; but often, oh, how often had it proved otherwise! The stormy April had been followed by a cold, frosty May, which chilled and destroyed both bud and blossom; it had been so with her, and also with Klaus. She drove away the sad remembrance, and turning quickly towards Anna Marie (fearing lest she might have divined her thoughts), was startled to find the girl's rosy face bent over her, and the generally cold, clear eyes dimmed with tears. Anna Marie sat beside her aunt on the gayly covered damask sofa, and laid her soft white arm caressingly around her neck.

The old lady's heart bounded with joy; it was the first time in her life that her niece had so tenderly shown her affection for her. She sat motionless, fearful of dispelling the charm and causing the girl to withdraw her proffered confidence, even as a bird that has seemed almost within our grasp, sometimes takes sudden fright and flies away, never to return.

“Aunt Rosamunde,” sighed and sobbed Anna Marie, “oh, Aunt Rosamunde, help me! I—I need advice, for Klaus” —

At this inopportune moment the door opened.

“Mr. Klaus sent me to say he would like you to come right downstairs,” called Mrs. Brockelmann, almost out of breath, adding, “he cannot find Isaac Aron’s bill for the last sale of corn.”

“I am coming, I am coming,” replied the girl.

The spell was broken, and immediately Anna Marie von Hegewitz became again the mistress of Bütze, firm and absorbed in her household duties.

Rising and throwing the train of her riding skirt over her arm, she walked hastily through the room, but before closing the door, turned and in a gentle, slightly embarrassed tone, said, “I will come again this evening, aunt.”

Quiet as a mouse, Aunt Rosamunde waited in the corner of the sofa. She had to ponder the subject over and over again, before she could realize that the rosy-cheeked, affectionate girl who had been sitting by her side, was really her niece, Anna Marie von Hegewitz. She passed her hand meditatively over her brow, and many and varied were the thoughts which chased each other through her mind.

“What a complete change!” she whispered to herself, adding in a louder tone, “surely Anna Marie is in love, nothing else could make her so tender, so demonstrative, so, — I do not know what. Yes, I believe Anna



Marie loves Stürmer. What a pity that Mrs. Brockelmann interrupted us just when she did, to ask about that bill. Dear, oh dear! has Klaus any idea of this? What will become of you, dear old boy, if Anna Marie leaves Bütze? Perhaps you'll marry then, too."

She rose from the sofa and stepped to the window; the rain had ceased and a flood of light flashed in radiant glory from the departing sun, covering the dripping trees and bushes with a golden veil.

"Spring must come," she murmured half aloud, and with folded hands commenced pacing up and down the room.

Anna Marie in the meantime had hurried downstairs and entered her brother's room. He sat before the secretary, rummaging the drawers for the missing papers. (In this respect Klaus von Hegewitz differed not a hair's breadth from other men; he could never lay his hand on what he wanted, and when he commenced a search, usually became so excited, that he seldom succeeded in finding the desired article.) At the door stood the overseer of the farm, and a little old man well known at Bütze, Isaac Aron, the Jew. After making a profound bow to Anna Marie, he remarked with an air of great satisfaction, —

"Now it will soon come to light, her ladyship knows just where to find everything in this house."

Paying no attention to what was said, Anna Marie stepped to the desk, put her hand into one of the draw-



ers, and drew out a small package of papers which she handed to her brother.

“There, Klaus,” she said, looking pleasantly into his flushed face, “why didn’t you send for me at once?”

His troubled countenance lighted up instantly.

“Yes, Anna Marie,” he cried merrily, “there is the stupid thing. I had it in my hands at least twenty times; a thousand thanks to you. I always acknowledged I could never get along without you.”

The smile suddenly left her face and she gazed earnestly at the stately form of her brother, who had stepped up to the men and was concluding a bargain with them. Thoughtfully pondering his words, she mechanically gathered up the train of her dress and left the room. Just as she was closing the door, Klaus called back, —

“Anna Marie, I will meet you later in the sitting-room; the gardener wished to consult with us about the selection of the place for our new grove.”

With an almost unconscious reply she slowly wended her way to her room; her eyes wandering around the familiar apartment, finally rested on a portrait of Klaus, but to-day her thoughts were with another, and visions of him rendered her oblivious to her surroundings. She seemed to see the red-tiled roof of Dambitz manor, and the budding Dambitz lindens, beneath whose swaying branches, long rows of graceful snowdrops drooped their fair white heads.

“Anna Marie;” yes, he had called her “Anna Marie,”

as in her childhood. She started as if awakened from a dream, but no, it was a reality; scarcely an hour had elapsed since he had addressed her by this familiar name, and she — Anna Marie von Hegewitz — had stood in his presence as one enchanted. What more had he said? All was forgotten, only the words “Anna Marie” sounded in her ears, and she remembered how on the evening of Martin’s day, he had taken her hand in his and clasped her to him in a loving embrace. It had been only for a moment, and she could scarcely realize that it was not all a fond delusion, for just then Klaus’s step had been heard. Klaus, oh, Klaus!

Leaning her head against the sofa she closed her eyes, and tried to fancy herself leaving the old homestead; could she ever bring herself to leave it? She saw Klaus standing in the door, his fond true eyes bedewed with tears, gazing after her with longing looks. Then her promise darted into her mind, the very words she had so often spoken to him “I will always stay with you, Klaus, I will never, never leave you.” With this thought the strong girl began to weep; she scarcely knew what it was to cry; hitherto it had been hers to say, “Tears, idle tears, I know not what ye mean!” But now their fountain was unsealed, and they streamed from her eyes; yet, despite all the pain and heartache, an indescribable feeling of happiness pervaded her being. Through the dark veil of her sorrow broke, here and there, a roseate ray of light, presaging a shining future. She felt that her existence, so far, was scarcely worthy

the name of life, because devoid of the one thing which consecrates a life, and makes it truly happy.

She rose and stood before the picture of her brother, murmuring, "Klaus, dear Klaus, I cannot do otherwise;" then with an expression of calm satisfaction and a look of unutterable peace in her bright eyes, wandered dreamily through the room.

The ringing of the bell for the servants interrupted this blissful reverie. She exchanged her riding habit for a house dress, kissed the dainty snowdrops, and after placing them in a Bible lying on her secretary, took up her basket of keys and started for the sitting-room. On her way she met a curly-headed girl, carrying an armful of polished brass candlesticks, whose brightness paled before that of her shining black eyes. She stepped aside to allow her mistress to pass.

"Well, Marieken, how about your trousseau? Is everything finished?"

The girl fairly beamed.

"Not yet, gnädiges Fräulein. It's three weeks till Easter. Gottlieb is staining the floors in our house, but we shall not take our things for eight or ten days."

Anna Marie gave a friendly nod, but said nothing. Again her thoughts were lost in Dambitz, wandering through its spacious rooms. Most of them were still unfurnished, but perhaps the time was coming when she too would be having things sent there. Filled with this idea, she gave Marieken a sympathetic smile; each girl felt her cup of happiness was overflowing, and despite

the difference in their worldly positions, their spirits were in perfect accord.

“I must hurry, Klaus will be waiting to speak with me about the new garden beds.”

Finding he had not yet arrived, and remembering that she herself had designed a plan for the projected grove, and laid it for safe keeping in a portfolio in the curtained partition of Klaus’s room, she hastened to the cabinet to get it.

It was growing dark, and she could but indistinctly discern the objects in this small apartment, which, on account of its numerous shelves and bookcases, Klaus jestingly named his library. Here the hearty laugh of her brother burst upon her ear, and she heard his clear, ringing voice pronounce her own name.

“Anna Marie, did you say, my dearest aunt? surely you cannot be in earnest; such an idea is simply preposterous.”

“Laugh if you wish, you doubting Thomas, but some day you will be convinced of the truth of my supposition; we women, particularly we spinsters, dear Klaus, have a finer perception than you men, in regard to such things. Before you are aware, some one will come along and claim your darling for his own, and you and I shall have no alternative but to submit gracefully, and bear our loss as cheerfully as possible. Oh dear, what will become of us!”

“Are you thinking of any one in particular? You speak in riddles, aunt.”

“You seem so much in the dark, Klaus, that I feel it a Christian duty on my part, to enlighten you. Are you wilfully blind? Don’t you see the girl does not act like herself, but seems like another being? Have you never? — but why all this useless talk? To make a long story short — Anna Marie loves Stürmer.”

Again she was interrupted by a hearty laugh from Klaus.

Anna Marie had been leaning silently on the doorpost, her eyes were closed, but at the sound of her brother’s merry voice, the ground seemed to sink beneath her feet.

“Kurt Stürmer? Uncle Stürmer? but dearest aunt, he is almost old enough to be her father!”

“Is that any objection, Klaus?”

“No, but I can hardly believe it. What are you willing to bet?”

Anna Marie drew herself to her full height; for a moment she was tempted to go in and say: “What are you disputing about? I can settle that question. I love Edwin Stürmer, yes, I love him far more than I can tell;” but, resisting the impulse, she remained standing in the same spot; there was something peculiar in her brother’s voice to-day.

“Aunt Rose, I cannot believe it.”

“Klaus, haven’t you felt for a long time that this must come?”

“Yes, yes, sometimes, I, — but I cannot tell you how I have dreaded this hour; the child is the only one to

whom my heart seems to cling; perhaps you do not realize, aunt, how very dear she is to me."

"Klaus," the old lady's voice was full of tenderness and love, "Klaus, my dear old boy, you are still young, why should you not also find just such happiness for yourself? I have often said it — you should have married."

"Marry! what are you talking about, aunt? You know that through all these years I have remained a miserably lonely man, because," —

"But, Klaus, are you still nursing your trouble and thinking?"

"Still — always," he said, ironically. "Am I not daily reminded of it? Do you imagine because my life here is passed in a restful quiet, because I sometimes laugh and am merry, because my health and strength give me a good appetite, and I enjoy my food and my wine? — Whenever I look out of the window, the tower of her father's house rises before my eyes; daily, almost hourly, I see my sister; I cannot pass that fatal spot in the garden without the words which *she* spoke there sounding and resounding in my ears; I know them by heart, aunt; during all the weeks I lay burning with fever, I murmured them, whispered them, called them aloud, and as her charming figure rose ever before me, I could hear anew, in her sweet voice, those bitter words: 'Put that stubborn, disagreeable child out of your house; why don't you send her to boarding school? she destroys our happiness.'" He laughed scornfully.

“And because I would not yield, and break the promise given my dying mother, she cast me aside, like a piece of clothing not altogether comfortable, and, and ” —

“Klaus, Klaus! for heaven’s sake do not talk in such a harsh, wild way,” interrupted the anxious voice of the old lady.

In the small room adjoining, Anna Marie had sunk upon her knees, with her head bent almost to the floor. This violent outburst was succeeded by a deathlike silence; then followed the sound of the young man’s footsteps, as he excitedly paced up and down the room.

“And now, at last, it must come,” he added, softly. “I am not selfish, no, I truly am not, but it will be unspeakably hard for me to resign her to another. I know I shall see her very often, I can ride over every day if I choose, and she will often come back to visit us; but don’t you see aunt? — oh, yes, I am foolish, veritably foolish! It’s the way of the world, and I might have seen it long ago. Stürmer is fond of Anna Marie, and it is natural that he should be. How fortunate that I am forewarned, late though it may be! Yes, I will take care that not the least shadow falls on her happiness; isn’t that the promise for which your eyes are pleading, Aunt Rose? Quiet all your fears, I will see to that.”

Anna Marie remained motionless on the cold floor, her head resting against the side of the door. She understood nothing further they had said:—these words alone rang in her ears, —



“Put that child out of the house, it disturbs our happiness;” *His* happiness — Klaus’s happiness.

She drew her hand over her forehead, as if to convince herself it was not all a dream. No, no, she was awake, it was a sad reality; she could move, she had strength to leave the little room, and go along the corridor to her own bedchamber.

Just as she was starting, Marieken came along the hall. Anna Marie paused a moment, and told her to inform Fräulein Rosamunde that she had a severe headache, and was unable to go to supper; that she did not wish to be disturbed and would retire early.

Startled by the deathlike pallor of her face, the girl replied, “Shall I call Mrs. Brockelmann?”

With a dissenting motion, Anna Marie placed her hand on the handle of the door and turned her head.

“Marieken!”

The girl stepped back.

“Do not feel worried, it is nothing of any importance, only go and do as I tell you.” Then hastily entering her chamber, she closed the door and drew the bolt.

“Alone! she wishes to be alone with her own thoughts,” observed Aunt Rosamunde at the supper table, where she and Klaus occupied seats at the right and left of Anna Marie’s usual place. There was no immediate response, but looking at the vacant chair, Klaus at last said, —

“Before long it will be this way not for one meal only, but for all.”



The old lady sorrowfully nodded assent; she scarcely knew how to reply, for a secret anxiety about the future had stolen upon her, since she had seen that Klaus's old wound was still open. She had supposed that long ere this it was entirely healed.

The next morning Anna Marie went her usual rounds through kitchen and cellar; she was pale, and gave her orders more concisely and abruptly than for some time past. For Klaus, however, she wore a friendlier smile, but even this seemed unnatural, and the mournful expression of her eyes betrayed the unconquerable sadness of her heart. For two hours she assisted him with his calculations, but he proved so absent minded and uneasy that most of the work devolved upon her; still, after careful thought and close attention, the results were pronounced satisfactory. Aunt Rosamunde alone was alarmed at the appearance of the girl, and the look of troubled care which shadowed, almost furrowed her brow, was to her a source of grief; yet she dared ask no questions, offer no sympathy, for Anna Marie had grown as icy and unapproachable as formerly.

The evening of the next day found Klaus in Aunt Rosamunde's room. The old lady, after much trouble with the broken cord, had just succeeded in rehangng Felix Leonhard's picture.

"Now, who was right, Aunt Rose?" queried Klaus. He stood near her and she saw that his countenance was flushed and his manner excited.

"Right? about what, Klaus?"

“About your assertions in regard to Anna Marie. She doesn't love him.”

“Did she say so? but even if she did, my dear Klaus, the fact that a young lady asserts she does not love a man, does not care for him, by no means proves that she means what she says. I have seen it hundreds of times, such protestations are only a thin veil to cover the feelings girls do not like to show.”

“You are wrong this time, Aunt Rose, Anna Marie has positively refused him.”

The old lady sank astounded in the nearest chair.

“Klaus, *est il possible?* Has he proposed to her?”

“Not to her, aunt, but he asked me for her, this afternoon. Anna Marie was sitting at the window as he rode up the garden, but rose immediately and went to her own room. Stürmer sent word that he wanted to see me alone, and then (truly Aunt Rose, you are a close observer) told me he loved Anna Marie, and had reason to believe his affection was returned etc., etc. In short he said all that lovers usually say on such occasions; he referred to his age, and said he would be a father to her as well as a husband. I assured him of my high regard and warm friendship; we talked about an hour and then I went to Anna Marie for her answer. Her door was open, she was sitting at the little sewing table by the window, looking out in the garden, and held in her hand a New Testament which she laid aside as I entered. I believe she had been crying for, although I saw no tears, her eyes were red and swollen and her

forehead burning as if with fever. As I began to speak she looked towards the window, still and silent as a statue; three times I was obliged to ask, 'Anna Marie, what answer shall I give him? Would you rather speak to him yourself? Shall I send him to you?' 'No, no,' she protested, 'anything but that; I cannot see him, say to him that I, — he must not be hurt, — that I do not love him. Klaus, I cannot go away from Bütze; oh, let me stay with you!' Then she sprang up, threw her arms round my neck and clung to me as if she would never let me go. She trembled violently, her whole body quivered like an aspen, and I fancied I could feel the heat of her hands through my coat. After much coaxing, and promising that I would never urge her to leave me, I succeeded in quieting her; then I had to go and break the news to poor Stürmer and that was no light undertaking, I can assure you."

"For heaven's sake, Klaus, what did he say?"

"He listened in silence, every trace of color left his face, and he looked like the ghost of his former self; at length he asked, 'May I speak to Anna Marie, myself?' As she had so positively refused to see him, of course I could not grant the request; then he took up his hat and riding whip, and tremulously extending his hand, bade me farewell in his usual warm-hearted manner. Poor fellow! I pity him from the depths of my heart."

"And Anna Marie?"

"I cannot find her anywhere, aunt, she is neither downstairs nor in her bedroom." . . .

On a slightly elevated spot, almost at the rear of the Hegewitz estate, towered a primeval linden, which overlooked the terraced lawn, gently sloping from its foot to the hedge surrounding the garden. Beneath its shadow an old, weatherbeaten stone bench invited to rest and repose. The spot commanded an extended view of a remarkably fertile land; waving cornfields, green meadows, dark pine forests, and sandy heaths diversified the scene.

There stood Anna Marie, scanning the numerous fresh mole hills in the meadow across the way, and the picturesque bridle path which wound along the willow-fringed bank of the gently flowing river. How frequently of late she had stood here! how often waited till the head of a brown horse appeared from among the foliage! waited, only to turn away and hasten to the house. He must never know how eagerly she had watched for him, with the passionate longing of a first love. *And to-day?* She scarcely knew what had brought her hither, but stood listlessly watching the rising mist, equally unconscious of the glories of the setting sun and the distant shoutings of the village children. The air was intoxicatingly pure, and sportive zephyrs toyed with the black lace veil which, unknown to Anna Marie, had fallen from her head. Suddenly she turned, the snorting and tramping of a horse had arrested her attention, "Kurt Stürmer!" she whispered, and started to go, but lingered, waited his approach, and saw him ride past and disappear in the gloom of the evening. Little did he dream whose loving eyes

watched him from above, whose ears were strained to catch the last clatter of the horse's hoofs crossing the bridge which united the lands of Hegewitz and Dambitz.

In the meantime, the evening sky had assumed the most brilliant hues and gradually lost its splendor. The rising wind swayed the budding branches of the lindens, and bore on its wings the sound of a maiden's voice singing this plaintive old melody : —

“Sooner far would I have perished,  
Than such true love vainly cherished;  
Sad and lonely is my heart” —

Unable to listen any longer, Anna Marie turned and hurried along the moist garden path, as if some one were in hot pursuit. Nearing the pond she slackened her pace, and at last stood by its side, trampling the damp sand and gazing thoughtfully into the dark waters, remembering that it was here Marieken had attempted to drown her sorrows when she feared she could not have Gottlieb for her own. “Would it really be such madness, if one” — Throwing out her arms she sprang suddenly into the dilapidated little boat, seized the oars, and was about to push from the shore when —

“Anna Marie! Anna Marie!” The sound was wafted to her with startling distinctness through the stillness of the evening.

She knew it was Klaus who called, and rousing herself as from a dream, tried to answer, but speech failed her. Shuddering, she stepped from the rocking boat and hastened towards the house.

## CHAPTER V.

Two summers and winters had flown since that eventful evening, and another spring was here in all its freshness and beauty. At the end of one of the long, dark halls in the old home at Bütze, a low door opened into an arched apartment which overlooked the garden. Directly in front of its windows stood a row of stately old trees, whose branches formed a network through which the sun and light with difficulty forced their way. For several generations past this had served as a lumber-room for the Hegewitz family, and innumerable were the varieties of old-time treasures, relics, ornaments, and cast-off articles which lay, hung, and stood there in indescribable confusion. There were antiquated wardrobes and chests, broken spinning wheels whose ivory ornaments were yellowed by the lapse of time, dark old portraits, so faded that one could scarcely see the faintest trace of a countenance; in one corner towered a gigantic bedstead, whose heavy curtains were still adorned with golden tassels; at one time this had been regarded as an invaluable relic, having been made by one of the early lords of Hegewitz for a prince of the then reigning house; but its sanctity was desecrated when, in 1809, the French took possession of their home and one of their generals appropriated it to his own use.

The golden eagle, so proudly enthroned on the head-piece, had lost his wings, but still held in his beak a strip of purple drapery, a memento of departed glory. A bridge of fine, delicate cobwebs stretched from one piece of furniture to another, and the yellowish dust with which the floor was strewn was an infallible sign that here the wood-fretter's reign was undisturbed.

In the midst of all this disorder stood Anna Marie, looking intently round, as if searching for something. She scarcely knew herself why she had wandered into this place; she remembered that in passing it the thought entered her mind that perhaps even this spot might enjoy a breath of pure spring air, and instinctively taking the key from her bunch she had opened the door and stepped in. Through the young leaves of the lindens without, a few rays of sunshine peeped inquisitively into the dingy apartment, and in their welcome light millions of tiny particles of dust danced up and down, as if rejoicing in the presence of such unwonted visitors. The quietness and calmness of the room harmonized with the girl's feelings; seating herself in an arm-chair, she leaned her head on its moth-eaten cushion, closed her eyes, folded her hands in her lap, and yielding to the tranquillizing influence of her surroundings, fell into a reverie.

The very rubbish seemed to preach to her of the transitoriness of all earthly objects. Where were now the hands which had formed and fashioned these things? and the eyes which had gazed upon them with so much



pleasure and delight? She thought, too, how her spinning wheel might some time stand here, perhaps not in the remote future; who knew how many days and hours would pass before strange hands might cast it aside as something superfluous, no longer needed. Strange hands! For hundreds of years the Bütze possessions had passed directly from father to son, and now—strange hands?

She rose and stepped to the window as if seeking to banish the unwelcome thought, but spring, balmy spring, seemed everywhere to greet her, and to recall the most miserable hour of her life; again she turned away and walked quickly through the room. Her foot struck something, and looking down she saw a cradle gently rocking; the clumsy, gayly painted old cradle in which for hundreds of years the Hegewitz infants had slept their first sleep,—and she—and Klaus. Anna Marie knelt down, laid her arm lovingly on the still-moving piece of furniture, and kissed the bright-colored roses and the rudely-carved angels. Tears coursed down her cheeks, the first she had shed since that memorable day.

“Oh, why did I ever have to lie in this cradle! it might have been so different, so much better, had it been otherwise. Poor thing! you too must moulder away, and at last pitiless hands will seize you and throw you into the fire. Poor Klaus! For my sake” —and she tenderly brushed the dust from the arabesques on the head-board, and laid the faded yellow pillows in their proper place.



Then the quick step of a man sounded along the hall, and before she had time to rise, Klaus stood in the open door.

“What are you doing here?” he asked in surprise, looking first jocosely, then earnestly at Anna Marie, who had risen and advanced to meet him.

“I just came to give the place a breath of fresh air, and found our old cradle, Klaus,” she responded placidly.

“But have you been crying, Anna Marie?”

“Oh, I was only thinking what a pity it was that the poor thing ever had to be used for me!”

The bitterness of the girl’s heart had forced itself, much against her wishes, to her lips.

Klaus drew her tenderly to him, stroked her hair caressingly, and in gentle, soothing tones said, —

“Why, little sister, what puts such thoughts into your head? What could I do without you?”

She shuddered, drew gently back, and freed herself from his embrace.

“But,” he continued, “I know where these ideas come from. Our quiet old home is far too lonely for you, you need young friends and companions, you shut yourself up too closely and do not have half the fun and enjoyment a girl should — even if you feel now that you can afford to do this, later in life, you will regret it I fear.”

Anna Marie shook her head.

As he stood before the window, his large, manly form

obscured the sunlight, and again the room assumed a dark, dingy aspect.

“Yes, yes, I have lived longer than you, and I know it will be the case. What do you mean, Anna Marie — if you —” he hesitated, and drawing a letter from his pocket, added, “perhaps it would be better for me to read this to you, I was looking for you to talk over the matter. Professor Mattoni is dead.”

Anna Marie cast a look of sympathy at her brother, who had turned from her and was gazing silently out of the window, while the paper in his hand trembled perceptibly. She knew how deeply he felt this death. Professor Mattoni had been his tutor for many years, had made his home with them in Bütze, and some of the fondest recollections of Klaus’s childhood were bound up in his being. As the boy developed into youth and early manhood, he had found in him not only a kind and loving teacher but a fatherly friend, and judicious counsellor; and after Herr Mattoni accepted the Professorship in the E. Institute in Berlin, Klaus had visited him regularly every year.

She grasped her brother’s hand, pressed it fondly between her own, and said, —

“Klaus, we have lost another dear friend, you and I shall soon be all alone.”

“He was more than a friend to me, dear, he was a father.”

Fully realizing it, she nodded assent.

“And the letter, brother?”

“A last request, almost illegible:—he wishes his little daughter to be under my care till she is able to commence the battle of life for herself.”

“His little daughter? Had he such young children?”

Unfortunately I must acknowledge I know little about his domestic affairs. I am aware he married late in life, and suspect he had good reasons for not wishing the public to know too much about his wife. I have heard, he picked her up somewhere in Hungary, others say she had been a singer in a Berlin variety theatre. He never mentioned the subject to me, and when I visited him in his study, I saw no evidence of ‘a guardian angel o’er his home presiding’; in all my visits, I never noticed any traces of a woman’s presence; nothing would have led me to suppose that Mattoni had a wife. I remember, however, that one of our friendly chats was once interrupted by the crying of a child in a neighboring room and that he rose quickly and knocked energetically on the door. The screaming child was no doubt carried away, for presently the noise ceased, and we continued our conversation. I did hear once he had lost his wife, but I never knew him to manifest the least outward sign of sorrow or mourning; the child, it seems, must still be living.”

“And now, Klaus?”

The noble-hearted man stood lost in thought, with his gaze fixed upon the little wooden cradle.

“And now, Anna Marie, everything depends on you;

you have already done a great deal for me," — here his voice assumed a tone of entreaty, — "can I, dare I, burden you with still another charge?"

"Klaus, how can you ask such a question? Was he not your friend? What else could we do? Please make all necessary arrangements as soon as possible, and let the child come."

"The child, Anna Marie, I imagine, she must have nearly outgrown her childhood."

"That makes no difference, Klaus, then I must begin all the sooner to initiate her into the mysteries of house-keeping, to instruct her in all kinds of domestic duties, which may prove useful to her in after life."

"I thank you heartily, my dear sister, and sincerely hope that the girl will prove a joy and a comfort to you." The sense of relief with which these words were uttered, did not escape the acute ear of Anne Marie.

With a faint attempt to smile, she said, —

"You *always* do so, Klaus; you act as if you were afraid to ask a favor of me; as if I ever could wish to do anything else than what seemed best to you."

"Precisely for that reason, my darling," he pressed her hand tightly, "I want — I want it to be done, not only from a sense of duty, but willingly. I should like to feel that it was a pleasure and not a sacrifice for you."

"Honestly, Klaus, I am truly glad the child is coming."

So they stood, face to face, in the deserted lumber-

room, which was now illuminated by a flood of golden sunshine. They heard the soft rustling of the young leaves without, and from afar sounded the blithe notes of the yellow-throated thrush.

“A sacrifice,” he had said, and had not each of them already made for the other, the greatest sacrifice that a human heart is ever called upon to offer, and did not each fancy the other entirely ignorant of this fact? At their feet the clumsy cradle, set in motion by Anna Marie’s dress, rocked to and fro, and continued to rock, long after they had left the room.

## CHAPTER VI.

THIRTY years with their joys and sorrows had passed away. It was a stormy November evening. Before a crackling fire in the sitting-room of the old Bütze Manor, sat a happy young married couple, the lady a blonde with mild blue eyes, and slender girlish form; the gentleman also fair, but of robust figure and attractive mien, his bright brown eyes in striking contrast with his light hair.

As the wind whistled and sighed around the old home it seemed to sing of bygone days; sometimes it howled furiously, and then gradually changed into lingering, plaintive strains, as though chanting some long-forgotten song of love.

Musing in her easy chair, the youthful wife listened for some time to its melancholy wail, then, in a clear voice said, "Klaus, this is just the evening to read those papers aloud."

"What papers, my dear?" he inquired, absent-mindedly.

"What a forgetful man you are, Klaus. The bundle of papers we found the other day when rummaging in Aunt Rosamunde's desk."

"Oh yes, that's a good idea! perhaps they will give us some points about our family history, — something in

reference to my parents. It has often made me sad to think how little I know about them. My mother says very little about family affairs, and whenever she speaks of her only brother, her eyes fill with tears. Come, sit beside me on the sofa and I will get the roll."

He stepped to an old-fashioned secretary and took from it a package of papers, while his wife, taking up a dainty piece of fancy work, seated herself cosily beside him. He placed the lamp in front of them and unfolded the manuscript.

"Look, Marie, at the quaint old handwriting."

"Yes, one can almost see in it a picture of the writer, small, neat and good. The very first words tell of the kindness of her heart."

"Yes," he responded, "she was always good and kind. I remember her distinctly. She used to send me candies and colored pictures. On Christmas she always came dressed as Santa Claus, and if I hadn't recognized her voice, and known her limp, I should have been afraid of her."

"Oh Klaus, do begin," begged the young wife impatiently.

Obediently he began. "My dear Anna Marie has gone away with little Klaus."

"That's you," she said, with a merry laugh.

A playful smile lit up his handsome features.

"There now, do keep quiet; Aunt Rose never dreamed that such a mischief as you would be prying into her affairs."



“You naughty slanderer. I must have a kiss for that rude speech.”

“Anything else you would like? he said, feigning a sigh, “now try to keep quiet,” and he began once more. —

My dear Anna Marie has gone away again with little Klaus. It's very quiet at Bütze; not a sound is to be heard; even Mrs. Brockelmann makes no noise, for ever since last winter she has been obliged to wear felt slippers. The rooms below are all closed. It isn't at all like home, but Anna Marie tries to cheer me, by saying there'll be more life after a while when the child is older. Ah, me! long before that I may be in my grave. I should like to live to see it, to hear the sound of merry voices once more in Bütze, but I can hardly expect it. Well, I mustn't give way to the loneliness and humdrum of my surroundings. No, I'll sit down by my desk and try to recount the events as they occurred. Sometimes I feel bewildered as these thoughts of the past rush and whirl through my brain, and yet I love to think over the good old times.

“If I only knew how to begin! I have already destroyed three quills. As I look into the vast expanse without, I see the trees robed in the soft, warm green of early spring; nothing dims the clear blue of the glorious canopy which stretches over the newly budding earth, save one greyish white cloud rising behind yon distant barn. As I breathe the warm, stifling air, premonitory of an approaching storm, another such spring



day arises before me, and now — I know what to say, how to commence, —

It was the ninth of May, sultry and oppressive as to-day. Anna Marie came to my room to see me; then, as now, I was domiciled in the upper story, in this very apartment, which still remains unaltered. The gorgeously flowered furniture bears its age well; it is almost as bright now as then. Time has not dealt so kindly with me. I am the same poor, fragile cripple, but my wrinkled visage has lost all traces of youth, and the infirmities and sorrows of age have long since stilled my flow of wit and humor. *Then* no one in the house laughed oftener or more heartily than I, for everything presented its humorous side to me.

I see Anna Marie plainly before me; she stands by the spinet, clad in her grey house dress, wearing a dainty black taffeta apron, and that indispensable bunch of keys hangs from her waist.

“Aunt Rose, please come and look at the room I have arranged for the child,” she said, and I limped along beside her to the large, gloomy room, between the guest chamber and Mrs. Brockelmann’s sleeping-room. I never could endure that room, and as I stepped into it to-day, this aversion was intensified. I acknowledge the snowy white pillows looked very inviting, peeping from under the green canopy, and that the air was redolent of the perfume of lilacs, which adorned the toilet table; but neither this nor the insufferably hot air from without, could counteract the chilly feeling which pervaded

this dismal spot, nor dispel the gloom that always hung about it.

“You should have had the room heated, and that hideous-looking picture removed,” I ventured to suggest as I pointed to the portrait of a young woman, whose sharp black eyes glared boldly around, as if bidding defiance to the whole world. The original of this picture had long been regarded as the mischief-maker, the evil genius of the family. According to the old, half-forgotten tradition, she had acquired this surname from the fact that two of the early Hegewitz brothers, captivated by her black eyes, had quarrelled about her, and to settle their difficulties had resorted to a duel in which one of them was slain. She too was a Hegewitz, and had been visiting at Bütze. After this unhappy affair, for which she had always been severely blamed, she refused the hand of the surviving brother, and heartlessly married another. At this remote period no one knew the full particulars, but her likeness remained in Bütze, and had been hanging in this same spot since time immemorial.

“Oh, let the picture stay just where it is; its history cannot affect her spirits; she won’t even know whose it is. I think it’s very comfortable here, and she has a charming outlook from the window.”

Her remark did not surprise me much, as I knew she had literally no perception of what was cosy and home-like. That charming feminine knack of pleasingly adjusting some perverse fold, or beautifying with a few flowers some cheerless spot, was sadly lacking in her.

“Poor thing,” I reflected, “what a change from Berlin to this gloomy solitude !”

Anna Marie turned suddenly towards me, and her usually severe countenance relaxed into tenderness. “Aunt Rose,” she said, “do you know I am truly glad Susanne Mattoni is coming.”

“And I am glad for your sake ; you need a friend.”

“You are mistaken, aunt, I need no friend ; and if I did, I should not choose such a young creature as she ; she is nothing but a child, a poor little orphan who needs some one to love her, and I” — here she paused and a glow of red suffused her cheeks.

“Why, my dear niece, you are not much older yourself than she ; I think she must be seventeen.”

“We do not reckon age, Aunt Rosamunde, merely by years ; we count by our souls, our minds, our experiences ; but God helping me, I intend that she shall find a mother in me. She is not suitable for my friend. In that relation I should be obliged to treat her as my equal, to place her on the same footing with myself, and that — never.”

I knew that the apparently cold heart of Anna Marie was at last warmed, and that a snug corner in it was ready for the motherless child, whom she was prepared to love with all the depth of her strong character — in her own way, I admit — a way that not every one could appreciate. How long it had taken even me to fathom some of the peculiarities of her nature ! a nature seemingly open to the eyes of all, but having some sharp cor-

ners and edges, with which it was not always prudent to come in contact.

“Has Klaus gone to meet your guest?”

“No, he has ridden over to the fields. What would be the use of *him* going to meet her? Old Mr. Maier took the carriage to S—— yesterday. I am expecting them back every minute. I hope they will come before the storm.”

The oppressive calmness which so often betokens a storm lay over the face of Mother Nature. I stepped to Anna Marie, who was standing close to the open window, and together we watched the heavy black clouds on the horizon, towering higher and higher. Just beyond the limits of the garden, an open stretch of fertile country met our gaze; wonderfully near seemed the enchanting woodland scenery, and Dambitz with its awkward castle tower.

“How near Dambitz appears to-day,” I remarked, “and yet it lies so far away!”

Anna Marie turned quickly.

“Very far,” she responded wearily.

“Stürmer is still away,” I began designedly. I felt a deep sympathy for the poor man who, for the sake of an incomprehensible maiden, had wandered again into the wide world, just when he had hoped to find a heart and a home; yet once, for a whole half hour, I had been blind enough to imagine she loved him. I received no reply, but saw round the girl’s mouth an expression of defiant determination, which caused me silently to

resolve never again to mention that name. Her eyes remained fixed upon the dark clouds, but at last in a voice betraying her stifled grief she asked, —

“Don’t you hear a carriage coming?”

“Perhaps it’s thunder,” — but before we had time to close the window, the door flew open and Mrs. Brockelmann, flushed with excitement, exclaimed, —

“Gnädiges Fräulein, she has come — they are come — mercy on us!”

“What is the matter?” queried Anna Marie.

“There are two of them, gnädiges Fräulein, and a queer-looking couple they are, — the old woman I mean, — and just think of the storm they brought with them; it doesn’t mean any good according to my notion.”

The expected storm had at last burst in violent fury; one deafening peal of thunder followed another, each flash of lightning appeared more vivid and awe-inspiring than the preceding; the floodgates of heaven seemed open, and streams of water gushing from the low-hanging clouds, descended and ran upon the earth. As the room was shrouded in darkness, the old housekeeper hastily lighted the candles on the huge, unshapely mantel, and exclaiming, —

“They are coming up the stairs,” hurried out, leaving the door open behind her.

With no word of interruption, Anna Marie had listened calmly and coolly to all Mrs. Brockelmann had to say. It was not her way to express her feelings or even to judge rashly in regard to things so suddenly

thrust upon her, and still in such an early stage of development. She deliberately snuffed the candles, and remained composedly standing by the fireplace in a position to command the best view of the door. Her countenance had resumed its usual look of chilling reserve; not the slightest vestige of expectation or curiosity was depicted upon it, nor did it change in the least when — how can I to-day describe it? — a girlish form appeared suddenly in the doorway, as if summoned by some magic spell. There was only one Susanne Mattoni! I do not know that she would have been called a beauty; perhaps her sparkling brown eyes, radiant with life, were rather large; her nose may have been a trifle short; her rosy lips slightly full; her face too pale; but I *do* know that it was with difficulty that I could suppress my admiration when, for the first time, I beheld the petite, childish form dressed in mourning. The graceful mantle had dropped from her shoulders, and a pair of wonderfully small white hands had impatiently thrown back the crape veil from the dainty hat. It was evident the little maiden was greatly agitated: she looked imploringly into Anna Marie's eyes, but meeting no responsive glance, soon averted her gaze in evident embarrassment. She knew not what to do, and her quick, irregular breathing betrayed her suspense and doubt.

“May God bless your entrance into our home, Susanne Mattoni,” sounded the clear, full voice of Anna Marie, as she embraced the fairy form of the hesitating child.

“I hope as long as you remain in Bütze you will find it a pleasant place of sojourn.”

There was an unusual tenderness in her tone, and I smiled at the rash conclusion I had reached only a few minutes ago. She needed no friend; young as she was, she stood by Susanne Mattoni with the motherly dignity of a woman of forty. Indeed, the mature way in which she transacted all her business, performed all her duties, was remarkable, and in striking contrast with her youthful years.

At this juncture a small, elderly woman crossed the threshold of the door. She was attired in a shabby gown of black silk, a reddish yellowish imitation India shawl enveloped her shoulders, and from underneath her cap of black crape, looked a sallow, wrinkled face; her small, sharp eyes scrutinized closely the contents of the apartment and then, hastening to Anna Marie, who was watching her in amazement, she threw up her folded hands in a dramatic manner, crying,—

“O mademoiselle, pardon my intrusion, but the child—I could not tear myself from Susanne!”

Realizing for the first time the full force of Mrs. Brockelmann’s words, as she had spoken of the two strangers, the old woman in particular, Anna Marie enjoined upon her not to act so, and with a decided manifestation of disapproval, inquired,—

“Who is she?”

The person in question lowered her head and remained speechless.



“Fräulein Mattoni, who is this woman?” demanded Anna Marie, turning to the young girl, who, it appeared to me, was regarding her companion with a look of anxiety. But neither did Susanne respond; not a sound was heard, save the rushing of the waters and the roaring of the storm without.

Anna Marie waited quietly a few moments.

“I have been in Professor Mattoni’s service ever since Susanne’s birth,” the old woman began at last, “and” —

“Consequently, you are the child’s waiting-maid,” concluded Anna Marie. “Well, you may remain here twenty-four hours, and see your young lady settled in her new home.” She then directed Mrs. Brocklemann, who had just assisted the chambermaid to bring up a trunk, seemingly light as a feather, to arrange a bed in the grey chamber for the unwelcome stranger. “And you, Fräulein Mattoni, will need quiet and rest after so long a journey; make yourself comfortable till tea time; we sup promptly at seven o’clock, and shall expect to see you in the dining-room at that hour.” She took the basket of keys from the mantel, but observing that I was still standing there, beckoned Susanne to her, and introduced her to me as a future member of our household. The child bashfully kissed my outstretched hand, but, as I gently raised her chin to obtain one more look at the face whose beauty had so charmed me, I noticed teardrops glistening in her eyes. “Alas! alas!” I thought, “how will the little princess ever get along in

that dismal room? how can she be happy in the society of such a reserved, cold-mannered person as Anna Marie?" I secretly stroked her pale cheeks and followed my niece. Passing along the corridor we met Klaus who, dripping wet, had just lighted from his horse.

"So the new comers have arrived?" he said, shaking the water from his wet clothes. "What is the little Berliner like?"

"You will soon see for yourself, Klaus."

"Very true, little sister, but first of all I must get on dry clothes."

"Yes, Klaus, but won't you hurry? I have something about which I want to speak to you, before you meet the young lady at the table."

"The young lady! whew, how formal!" and with a peculiar smile, he continued, "perhaps you'd like me to wear my dress suit."

"Never mind, you will open your eyes when you see her, Klaus," thought I to myself. Suddenly I felt oppressed by a strange foreboding and began to wonder if, after all, it would not have been better for us if Susanne Mattoni and her keen, black-eyed, witch-like companion had never entered our abode.

Klaus and Anna Marie had left me and I stood alone in the centre of the room. No longer able to suppress my thoughts, I gave expression to what had now become my firm conviction. "Undoubtedly, the children have both made a mistake, a very foolish one, I fear. What trouble may spring out of it!"

Yes, there was much. If the sorrowful consequences, the bitter tears, and the many unhappy hours which Susanne Mattoni brought into our loved Bütze, could have been foreseen, Anna Marie would not only have prohibited the old woman from remaining more than twenty-four hours, but would have banished Susanne herself.

I was still standing on the same spot when the door unexpectedly opened, and the miserable-looking creature about whom I had been meditating, stepped in. "Gnädiges Fräulein," she anxiously implored, "won't you come and see the child? She is crying, she is sick: oh, I fear her heart will break!"

Her frame trembled violently and she wrung her hands in despair. As I limped across to the detested room, I again wondered what would be the end of all this.

Susanne sat half undressed before the toilet table, sobbing piteously, her dark tresses flowing over her white dressing gown, and her face buried in her hands. Her old nurse tried to soothe her, —

"Cheer up, sweetheart, her ladyship is here to see you, *she* will be kind to us; *she* will let me stay with you and speak a good word for us to the young lady. Come, dry your tears, my lambkin, I am sure she will do it; only ask her."

Susanne Mattoni raising her head, wiped the tears from her eyes; as she saw me, she sprang forward, and once more I was fascinated by the charms which had woven themselves around her being.

“What is the matter with you, child?” I inquired, tenderly.

“You are very kind, mademoiselle, it’s nothing at all, only everything seems so strange, and the long ride,” she replied, shivering with cold.

“Dress yourself quickly,” I advised, “and go down to the dining-room, there is always a fire there; you will feel much better after you get a good warm supper.”

The old woman seized a comb and began drawing it through Susanne’s waving locks, with seemingly as much pride as if her young mistress had been a princess. Then she commenced talking of her delicate constitution and fine nerves. I forgot that I had come to remain only for a few minutes, and stood listening in amazement. What is the world coming to? I am sure nerves have never been the fashion in Märkisch country seats. What would Anna Marie say? but above all!—

Anna Marie had already signified her intention of giving Susanne Mattoni a thorough course of instruction in the different branches of housekeeping, with a view of enabling her more easily to make her own way in the world. And now — a lady’s maid — nerves — the beauty of a grand lady, and childlike hands and feet!

Hastily the faithful attendant drew from the trunk a small black dress, shining in its newness and bedecked with countless ruffles and bows. Round her swanlike throat she laid a fichu of black lace, which she secured at the waist with graceful ribbon bows. Her tiny silk slippers were fastened with handsome straps, and every-

thing about her was much finer and daintier than we were accustomed to see at Bütze. Without doubt the old woman was an adept in her business; as Susanne Mattoni stood there, she presented a picture of loveliness more charming than any I had ever before or have ever since seen.

Just as the old woman, to complete Susanne's toilet, broke off the choicest stalk from the bunch of white lilacs and arranged it coquettishly in the opening of her fichu, the question for the third time forced itself to my lips, "How will all this end?"

"But, my dear," said I, "we have no company to-day; we shall take our simple meal — oaten grits with milk — by ourselves."

There was no response, but the busy maid stooped to rearrange a bow; my eyes wandered from Susanne, whose beauty was enhanced by the delicate pink color now suffusing her cheeks, to the trunk, which, since the new dress had been taken from it, presented a significant emptiness. Noticing this, the old woman quickly lowered the lid.

"It is striking seven," she remarked, and in fact the old clock in the Bütze church tower had scarcely sounded its faint, seventh stroke before we heard the supper bell ringing out for the servants its louder call to the evening meal.

"Come," I said, "the room for the domestics is downstairs."

"Thank you," she disdainfully responded, "I am not

at all hungry, but I should like a little wood; the child can never sleep in this damp atmosphere."

Referring her to Mrs. Brockelmann, I accompanied Susanne Mattoni to the dining-room.

Even now I can picture the whole scene. The table with its shining pewter tea service, illumined by four large candles, all struggling to show their superiority over the fast fading twilight; the arched window niche in which stood Klaus and Anna Marie. His arm was around his sister's waist, and he had evidently spoken to her some earnest, friendly word; never since have I seen them standing in just that way. As we entered they turned towards us, Klaus, full of curiosity, looking beyond me to the slender girlish form. Anna Marie started, and I cannot wonder at it, for never did I see Susanne Mattoni more charming, more captivating than she appeared at that moment, standing in embarrassment opposite her father's young friend. Had she expected something different or were her ideas of him correct?

A maidenly blush suffused her sweet face. Anna Marie colored also. I do not know whether it was anxiety or anger that prompted her cautioning motion, as Klaus stepped forward to greet the little stranger.

"Supper is ready," she somewhat impatiently announced; "Fräulein Mattoni, your seat will be beside Aunt Rosamunde."

As we stood at our respective places, she repeated, in a strangely faltering voice, the beautiful words of the table prayer generally used by the Germans: "The eyes



of all wait upon Thee ; and Thou givest them their meat in due season ; ” but the Amen was scarcely audible.

One look at my niece, whose eyes glanced over Susanne’s stylish dress and rested on the white flower in her corsage, revealed to me Anna Marie’s opinion of the whole matter. So entirely different were these two girls, it seemed almost amusing to attempt to compare them, and I began to wonder whether the one in the substantial gray dress fastened close up to the throat and the other in the neat but flimsy silk could ever live together in harmony, without each making more than ordinary concessions.

Klaus busied himself entertaining Susanne, who was sitting opposite him. He referred cautiously to the death of her father, but quickly changed the subject when he saw the tears gathering in her eyes ; tears which she vainly endeavored to suppress, as she bravely tried to swallow the, to her, unpalatable oaten grits. A fresh egg, which she afterwards took, appeared more savory. I remember she timidly, though smilingly, refused a glass of foaming brown beer, and I am firmly convinced she rose from the table with her appetite not wholly appeased.

The lights were burning in the sitting-room. By Klaus’s usual place stood a plate with tobacco, a cup with curled lamplighters, and the daily paper. At Anna Marie’s seat was her knitting, while beside mine were my spectacles and workbag. Every evening Mrs. Brockelmann arranged things in this same order, with the ex-



ception that in winter Anna Marie's spinning-wheel was substituted for her knitting. To-night Klaus's pipe remained on its shelf in the corner; Susanne Mattoni reclined in his easy chair, resting her head on its soft cushions with all her natural ease and grace, while he, like a true knight (with a chivalry remarkably becoming), occupied a chair directly opposite.

The conversation, in which Anna Marie took very little part, turned naturally to Berlin. Fräulein Mattoni was at home in her native city, and chatted with perfect ease; her eyes sparkled, her cheeks flushed, while a roguish dimple mischievously appeared and disappeared. Sometimes she was in the opera house or theatre, sometimes in the Zoölogical Gardens, and again in Charlottenburg. She related numerous anecdotes of the royal family, and many and varied were the places and objects she described. Klaus never seemed to lose interest or tire of asking questions. His paper remained unread, and not one longing look did I see him cast at his pipe.

Anna Marie sat quietly knitting. At nine o'clock she deigned to remark, "I know you must be tired, Fräulein Susanne," and, with an effort to be friendly, continued, "We generally retire at ten o'clock, but I am sure you will need an extra hour's rest to-night."

When in response to the bell call Mrs. Brockelmann appeared, the youthful maiden, with the air of an obedient child, but with a look of astonishment in her brown eyes, bade them "Good-night." In passing out of the

door, she turned and with an irresistibly pleading look said, —

“May Isa sleep in my room?”

“There is a bed prepared for your companion in another apartment,” replied Anna Marie. “You are not afraid? Mrs. Brockelmann occupies the next room.”

Susanne ventured no further, made an exceedingly graceful courtesy, and disappeared.

“Oh, let the old woman stay in her room,” urged Klaus. “Just think how one feels the first night in a strange house!”

Anna Marie said not a word, but took her brother’s pipe from the shelf, and, smilingly compelling him to take the armchair, resumed her knitting.

“Now, Klaus, I beg of you, don’t be so foolish as to sit in that straight-backed chair again. It must have been very uncomfortable.”

“Rather death than impoliteness,” was the good-natured response.

“But everything at the right time. Susanne Mattoni will now become a member of our family, and nothing is more wearisome than so much formality and ceremony. She will be just as comfortable in another chair.”

“All right, Anna Marie, but really what do you think of the girl?”

“Well, Klaus, since you have asked a plain question, I will give you a candid answer. I acknowledge I had hoped for something quite different.”

"I too," he responded, puffing the first whiff from his pipe.

"And I feel sure if we want to make anything out of her, the old woman must go."

"Right, you are right there," I thought, "if it is not too late now."

Klaus picked up the paper. "Well, sister mine, we can talk that over again; you might let her stay a couple of weeks, just to see Fräulein Mattoni fairly settled in her new home."

"Am I to have charge of the girl or not?" interrupted Anna Marie, with a sharpness never before shown to her brother. "How can this spoiled child of fashion learn to wait on herself if this woman is to be always at hand, ready to perform the most trivial service, to bedeck her with flowers, and turn her head with all sorts of frivolities? I have said it, twenty-four hours, not one minute longer; our principles are entirely opposed, and the sooner we part the better."

Klaus gazed at his sister in blank astonishment. "You are right, Anna Marie," he said, endeavoring to pacify her, "but I am afraid you will never be able to mould this girl's character according to your own ideas. She appears to me" —

"To be made out of different material," sarcastically finished Anna Marie. "I tell you that will be no obstacle to my training her for a useful life; but ladies of leisure, rouged cheeks, and theatrical dressing I will not suffer in my house."

She had risen, and the indignation which the toilette schemes of Susanne's companion had aroused, glowed in her hot, rosy cheeks, and flashed from her eyes.

Klaus laid down the paper he had just taken up. "I beg of you, sister, let us talk the matter over with more composure. The girl has just entered our home, and is she going to cause bad feeling between us already?"

Without a word Anna Marie took her seat and resumed her knitting; but after a short pause hastily rose again, tied a black lace kerchief round her head, and left the room.

Her brother's eyes followed her. "Aunt Rosamunde, what does this mean?" he asked, with a sigh.

"She had hoped to find something different, Klaus, and is sadly disappointed."

"I think the girl quite attractive, Aunt Rosamunde, and understand plainly the professor's anxiety about her; but how will it end, with Anna Marie's energy and *her* love of ease? Our heavenly Father himself has given us the beautiful as well as the useful. He has made not only the useful fowls but also Birds of Paradise."

"Dear Klaus," it came from a full heart, "let the Bird of Paradise wing its flight; it would never suit in your nest."

"Never, Aunt Rosamunde!" he responded, impulsively. "I am bound by the last wish of the best friend I had in the world."

As I saw the color mounting in his face, and the tears

gathering in his eyes, I was more forcibly than ever before impressed with his pleasing, manly appearance.

Mrs. Brockelmann's entrance put an end to our conversation. She was looking for Anna Marie and seemed somewhat ruffled. "It is too bad, gnädiger Herr, the old woman's bed isn't good enough for her, and she is going to sit up all night with her young lady. She has a fire in the room hot enough to roast an ox, and this is May. She's cooking too, the room smells of nothing but green tea," and, muttering, to herself she vanished.

Klaus laughed outright. "It's open rebellion, Aunt Rosamunde. Do me the favor to look after these strangers for once, yourself. Perhaps you can make the old woman understand that — well — that she cannot remain here."

Supposing it was the best thing to do, I started upstairs. From a window in the corridor I espied Anna Marie, in the damp moonlit garden; she stood motionless, peering into the misty darkness, and at first sight looked like a black shadow. "What a girl!" I thought. "If some homely, forlorn little creature, with clothes all tattered and torn, had come to this house today, she would have opened her heart to it and given it a sympathizing kiss — but now" —

Without knocking, I entered Susanne's room. The old woman motioned me to tread lightly, that her young charge was sleeping. She sat in an armchair by her bedside, but, as I stepped nearer, rose and drew aside the curtains, that I might obtain a good view of the girl.

Calm and beautiful she lay, wrapped in peaceful slumbers. Her breathing was soft and quiet, a happy smile played round her ruby lips, and her long lashes rested like dark shadows on her pale cheeks. Her night sack, with a superfluous trimming of imitation lace and bows, presented, in the dim light of the candles and the fading embers, a better appearance than might have been expected. The tiny hands were clasped, and the dark tresses, unconfined, lay over the pillows. Without doubt the picture was charming.

“Isn’t she beautiful? Isn’t she lovely?” proudly asked her devoted attendant.

I nodded assent. “You poor Bird of Paradise,” I thought. “Here you will soon be robbed of your brilliant plumage, feather by feather. Well for you if you do not feel its loss.” Remembering my promise to Klaus, I turned and motioned to the old woman, not, however, without upsetting a small silver vessel and cup standing close by the fireplace. “Oh, a teapot?” On the sofa, in picturesque disorder, lay Susanne’s clothing; one little shoe on the floor, the other on the toilet table, while near by were hats, ribbons, and all sorts of frippery in maddest confusion.

“Wouldn’t you rather lay these things neatly in the closet?” I suggested, “so Susanne could find them without your assistance.”

“Oh! that won’t be necessary,” she responded, confidently, and, giving me a knowing wink, added, “No one would be so cruel as to separate us.”

"You are mistaken, my friend. You must leave this house to-morrow, and Susanne Mattoni, as was promised her father, will remain under our care and guidance. He said nothing at all about you."

"You might as well give me my death warrant," was her passionate reply. "What am I to do then? Where am I to go? I had a presentiment as we rode through your gateway that it would be bad luck to me."

"Of course my niece will allow you to visit Susanne occasionally," I comforted her.

"And what will become of her?" pointing to the sleeping damsel. "She is not accustomed to having me out of sight for a minute. No, no, I will not, I cannot go. If the young lady has no sympathy, perhaps the young gentleman, who used to visit the professor so often, may have. Where is he? I will go and ask him, I will get down on my knees and beg him to let me stay."

"Listen, my friend" (I spoke decidedly, holding her by the loose sleeve of her dress), "the best interests of your young mistress require you to leave her. So far as I know, Professor Mattoni left his daughter without any means, and it is high time that she should learn to wait upon herself. A poor burgher's daughter has no use for a lady's maid, she must learn to work—to make herself useful."

"Gracious me!" sobbed the withered little creature, "I thought she was coming to this house as a guest, and you intend to make a maid of her."



I could scarcely refrain from a bitter reply. Had her affection for the girl completely turned her head? In any case argument was useless.

“Go downstairs,” I said angrily, “and ask Mr. Klaus if you wish; perhaps he can make you understand what position Susanne Mattoni is to occupy in this house.”

Drying her tears, she picked up a light, seized a brush and comb, and, hurrying to the looking-glass, dipped into the numerous little boxes on the bureau; she took from one a powder, from another a paste, and began rubbing them on her sallow, withered face. As I watched the performance, I conceived for her a thorough disgust. She tied afresh the strings of her cap, took from the trunk a lace handkerchief, and holding it solemnly in her hand, announced that she was ready to go and present her request to the master.

“You have been in the theatre?” I asked, as I looked in amazement at the artificially red cheeks.

“Ten years, mademoiselle; I played the humorous parts, her mother” — pointing to Susanne — “the tragic. Oh, we acted gloriously together!”

I listened to nothing further.

“Alas! alas!” I stammered, softly opening the door and showing her along the corridor, “what has Klaus, in the kindness of his heart, brought upon us?”

Seated by the bed of the little stranger, I watched her young face with deep interest; only God knew in what soil this beautiful flower had grown. It was clearer than ever that, if anything was to be made out of the

child, the old woman must go. God grant it might not be now too late!

In the dim light the nearest objects were scarcely discernible, and in the darkness of the corner the only thing visible was the picture of the mischief-maker of Bütze. What little light there was seemed to centre in her face, and the sharp, black eyes looked down upon me with a wicked glare. An indescribable anxiety crept over me; involuntarily I folded my hands in prayer, —

“Lord, thy ways are wonderful — lead us gently; let the peace which has so long blessed our home remain in it; grant that no second mischief-maker may have crossed our threshold; keep unbroken the strong band of love which unites the hearts of Klaus and Anna Marie. Amen.”

At this moment the door opened and the old actress stepped in. She appeared excited and did not deign to notice me, but, kneeling by the bed, laid her head on the pillow and wept bitterly.

“Isa, Isa,” murmured Susanne in her sleep. Quickly the old woman raised her head and pressed the girl’s dark locks to her lips.

“I am going, mademoiselle,” she whispered; “no one in this house has any heart, but if anything happens to a hair of this child’s head I—I” — and, muttering some threat, she again threw herself on the bed.

“When shall you start?”

“Early in the morning,” was the languid response.

"Then lie down and try to sleep," I said, pointing to the sofa and starting to leave the room.

"Oh, mademoiselle!" she sprang up and caught hold of me, "promise me that you will be good to Susanne and speak a kind word to her when she cries."

"Certainly, I will do all I can; she will meet with nothing but kindness here."

"Not from the young lady, she has no heart; perhaps she never had any, perhaps it's dead. She knows nothing of the joys of youth, cares nothing for its beauty and its love. She never laughs. I've seen people who could not laugh and be merry; they are always jealous of those who enjoy life and captivate others with their charms; she will never love Susanne."

Despite her dramatic manner, she exhibited much real feeling, and there was a touching pathos and sympathy in her words.

"Life is earnest, you know," I answered.

"But she has never breathed in any other atmosphere than one of cheerfulness, gayety, and beauty," rejoined the curious creature.

"I will promise you to keep my eye on the child," I said, wishing to get away, but in vain. She held me by the dress and begged me for God's sake to listen to her; that it was not love of authority or ambition which made her desire to stay with her charge, but a sacred promise. She would take no denial, and I was obliged to listen to her story, which she related in a most theatrical manner. Notwithstanding the almost inaudible tones, her

gesticulations, raising and drooping of her eyes, etc., in fact the whole recital, impressed me as a masterpiece of stage art. I cannot now reproduce all she said, but I remember she introduced her story by announcing she was forty years of age and had been very beautiful. Her words brought to my mind a verse a poet once put into the mouth of his harper :—

“Once I was young and beautiful,  
No one would dream it now.”

I granted her the alleged forty years, and she began to unroll some pages of a life so diversified and romantic that I am sure Father Goethe himself, had they come in his way, would have taken them up and framed them in his “*Wilhelm Meister*.” In short, she gave me to understand that Professor Mattoni had really loved her, but, being in some unaccountable way temporarily fascinated by her companion, had transferred his affections and hastily married her. “I took it so to heart, mademoiselle,” she added, “that they feared I’d lose my reason. With a great effort, however, I conquered myself and devoted my life to the interests of his young wife, and so effectually that I soon rendered myself indispensable to her happiness.”

She described Susanne’s mother to me, “pretty as a picture, with great dreamy eyes, but very illiterate,” and said, “The professor was a dictatorial man, who, when he found his wife could not sympathize with him in his intellectual tastes, treated her worse than a ser-

vant. In fact, mademoiselle, she was wretchedly stupid. Oh, these men! even the wisest and best of them are blinded when they fall in love; but, poor fellow, he was punished severely enough for his disloyalty to me."

Then followed a description of Frau Mattoni's house-keeping, in which Isabella Pfannenschmidt represented herself as having taken a lively interest. She had had the general management of the establishment, for Frau Mattoni devoted most of her time to novel reading or frolicking with her cat. The women lived in a small apartment in the back, while the professor occupied two rooms in the front of the house. So scanty was the allowance which he furnished them, that they were often unable to supply the necessaries of life. The troupe with which Isabella Pfannenschmidt had been engaged left Berlin, and she could not accompany them, for "Mademoiselle, she and the child would have perished in misery and dirt; she was so indolent, that unless one actually placed her food right before her, she'd have starved rather than rise from her comfortable lounge. The professor took all his meals in a restaurant. He preferred that no one should know he had a wife and child, and we had to keep quiet, I tell you, when any one was round."

"Susanne's first little dress was cut from an old red velvet robe formerly worn by her mother when playing the part of queen. The father never paid any attention to the charming child till after his wife's beautiful dreamy eyes were closed in death. As she lay in her

coffin, and the child in gleeful ignorance ran to snatch from her body the few flowers I had bought with my last penny, he seemed, for the first time, to be roused from the lethargy of the last years. He knelt down with his child and prayed God to forgive his wicked neglect. Good resolutions, you know, are very cheap. Well, he did give us rather more for our housekeeping. I was able to dress Susanne so that we could walk out without appearing conspicuous; he provided for her education, and she learned fast.

“He paid no attention whatever to me, but accepted my services as a matter of course, though he knew that through these long years I had been true to him and his. Our past seemed blotted from his memory; he appeared to forget that, notwithstanding he had blighted my youthful prospects, I had been the devoted attendant of his wife and child, and now *she* is going to be taken from me. What have I done to deserve this?”

Truly, I felt sorry for the poor old creature, even if she had underrated her age and exaggerated her early charms; there might be some truth in the fact that at one time the professor had loved her; at any rate she undoubtedly had loved him with all the sincerity and fidelity of her poor woman's heart. She had loved the child for his sake, and without murmuring had made many sacrifices for it, and now he rewarded her for all this by taking Susanne from her. Poor Isabella Pfannenschmidt, notwithstanding yours has been a life of vanity, this flame which burns in your heart rises proudly above all your

theatrical ways and nonsensical frivolities; poor old Isabella! And yet it would be an injustice to the child to allow her to live longer in this unhealthy, immoral atmosphere. No, Isabella must go, even if it breaks the heart of the once merry soubrette.

"Susanne will always value your friendship," I said, trying to comfort her, "and she will never forget what you have done for her."

"Oh, yes, I know she has her father's disposition," sobbed the miserable old woman; "she will forget me, and, worse still, will be ashamed of me."

"That is not saying much for the child's heart," I replied, reprovingly.

She started. "No, no, I wronged her, she was always good and kind, very good," and she continued, "I will not go very far, only to the next village. What should I do in Berlin? I should die of homesickness. I will rent a room in S., and take in sewing. I can embroider very nicely both in zephyrs and gold thread, and when the loneliness is greater than I can bear, I will walk down the turnpike, and if necessary, come far enough to see the house where she lives."

She now began with streaming eyes to snatch up here and there something from among the clothing which lay scattered in confusion round the room. Picking up the tiny shoe from the table, she pressed its little sole tenderly to her cheek.

In spite of my emotion, I whispered, "Don't forget the little toilet boxes."



She shook her head. "No, no, I will pack everything right away, for, if she wakened, I could not bid her good-by. I must leave before daybreak."

I reached out my hand, for I really sympathized with her. "You may rest assured," I said, "Susanne will be well taken care of here, and I hope it will comfort you when you know it is all for her good." I stepped from the room, but as I was closing the door, turned once more and saw the small, gipsy-like figure, her face buried in her hands, crouching in the midst of her trifling fineries, and weeping bitterly.

## CHAPTER VII.

My first question the next morning was about the old woman. I learned that she had gone, and that my niece was in the room with our little guest. "Anna Marie has begun her training early," I sighed, as, with less satisfaction than usual, I ate my oaten porridge. Yesterday lay behind me like a confused dream, while Susanne's presence in the house pressed like a weight upon my soul. Soon Anna Marie's voice sounded along the hallway; she was speaking French, so I knew she was talking to Susanne. I caught only a few disconnected words before there was a knock at the door, and both girls stepped into my room.

"We came to wish you good morning, aunt," was my niece's friendly greeting. My inquiring glance turned quickly to Susanne. Tears moistened her long lashes, but playful dimples and merry eyes showed that mirth, not sadness, was her native element.

She had on the black travelling dress of yesterday, covered by a woollen shawl which Anna Marie had thrown round her, but despite everything her appearance was like a sunbeam.

"Aunt Rosamunde, I want to ask if you couldn't give Susanne some little duties to perform, in return for which you would be willing to teach her to knit and

embroider. I have examined her and find she knows nothing about such things."

"With pleasure, Anna Marie." Indeed I was glad to be intrusted with some part of the girl's education. "Do you like fancy-work, Susanne?"

She shook her head laughingly, and replied, —

"O no, I do not; it makes me dizzy to see the needles go round and round."

Anna Marie appeared not to notice the answer.

"Fräulein von Hegewitz will teach you netting and white embroidery, and I will instruct you in house-keeping; now we will have our breakfast, and then we can get right to work. Klaus has been in the field for some time," she added; "they are going to mow the first grass to-day."

And so they started, Susanne with drooped head following Anna Marie. Will she ever understand how to manage such a child? She seems to expect to root out at once all the evils and mistakes of her early training, but that will be impossible. May God help her and show her the right way!

A little later, as I was taking my morning promenade through the garden, I saw Susanne coming from the pond; she was rushing along with outstretched arms, as if she wished to embrace the green tree tops, the golden sunshine, and the warbling birds, as if in one long, loving clasp she would press all nature to her heart. Her short skirts were flying in every direction, the woollen shawl had disappeared, and her plump, white shoulders

formed a beautiful contrast to the deep mourning in which she was attired. Indescribably charming she was as she hurried along; the great wonder was how she had escaped from Anna Marie. As she neared the secluded nook in which I was seated she halted, stood for a few minutes gazing into the clear blue expanse above, then humming a low sweet strain stooped, plucked a narcissus, and fastened the pure white blossom on her breast. A moment after, thrusting her hand into her pocket she drew out something which she quickly put into her mouth, but which in no way interfered with her singing, for as she proceeded on her way she trilled the familiar melody from the opera of *Don Juan*, —

“*Batti batti o bel Masetto  
La tua povera Zerlina.*”

As I slowly followed her footsteps I noticed, lying on the roadside, a tiny white paper she had evidently dropped. “A bonbon! precisely what we might expect!” I said, feeling a little provoked as I stooped to pick it up, “it is the natural sequence of such training, it could not be otherwise.” Unwrapping it I found inside a French motto sufficiently sentimental and frivolous for the time of Louis XIV., if such things as bonbon mottoes had been in fashion at that period. What would Anna Marie with her pure, maidenly feelings think of such a thing? Wondering, I shook my head. O Klaus, if your Bird of Paradise were only in any place in the world — any place but here! At the next turn of the

road I overtook Susanne, who was admiringly scrutinizing a thorn bush that bent gracefully beneath its weight of fiery buds and blossoms.

“O how charming!” she called as she saw me, “how beautiful!” and the purest joy beamed from her eyes. But how did this and the bonbon agree?

At that moment I resolved never to lose my confidence in the girl's character, and to endeavor at every opportunity to elevate her thoughts and raise her tastes to a higher level. I can truthfully assert that I honestly tried to carry out this resolution. Not harshly nor dictatorially as Anna Marie, and far differently from Klaus. Oh Klaus! The thought of those first eight weeks — could I but picture aright those never-to-be-forgotten days. There is little to say and yet they brought momentous transformations into our home.

Whether Susanne Mattoni felt the loss of her attendant or not, I am unable to say. When she wakened that morning and found Isabella gone and only Anna Marie by her bedside, great tears coursed down her cheeks. Then my niece entreated, “Be reasonable, Susanne, and do not ask me for favors you know I cannot grant.” With an inimitable mingling of childishness and pride, the girl responded, —

“Don't trouble yourself, Fräulein von Hegewitz; I never ask for anything the second time.”

Not till years afterwards did Anna Marie relate this story to me. Unquestionably, this little body had its full share of pride.

My niece began Susanne's practical education with characteristic thoroughness. Her own robust constitution and active habits rendered her unable to realize that there were those who could not endure half the activity she deemed necessary for herself. Susanne was expected to make the daily rounds of kitchen and cellar; she was initiated into the mysteries of the large wash, and, in the burning heat of the sun had to ride through the fields to get a practical knowledge of agricultural botany. Anna Marie's countenance expressed the happiness she felt in having some one to care for, some one to whom she thought she was indispensable.

And Klaus? Never before had he so persistently confined himself to his own room; he was rarely found in the garden, seldom on the porch or in the sitting-room, and only at meal times were we favored with his presence. Then his eyes invariably wandered towards Susanne, always, as it seemed to me, with a look of sympathy and apprehension, though he never expressed the slightest dissatisfaction with his sister's plans and arrangements.

"Aunt Rosamunde," Anna Marie said sorrowfully one day, "I am afraid Susanne's presence is a burden to Klaus; he is so quiet and dejected, so unlike his former self."

"But why should you deem Susanne the cause?" I asked, "Klaus does seem out of sorts, but is there not probably some other reason? Farmers are never at a loss to find new annoyances, they have a great many imaginary grievances."

“Oh, it couldn't be that, Aunt Rosamunde; it is years since we've had such a bountiful harvest, it is a pleasure to ride through the fields.”

And Susanne, to whose very existence merriment and laughter seemed essential, went around as one in a dream. Often during the hour appointed for our lesson in needlework, her tiny hands would sink into her lap and she would fall peacefully asleep, like a tired child. I never disturbed her slumbers, for her pale little face bore traces of too close confinement and overwork. Once, while so reclining in her chair, resembling “The Sleeping Beauty,” except that a netting needle instead of a spindle was clasped in her hands, Klaus entered the room. He advanced noiselessly, and, with his arm resting on his side, stood for a moment and watched her closely. Then he asked, softly, —

“Don't you think she looks ill, aunt?”

“It's the change, Klaus — the difference in the food — the ” —

“It would be nearer right,” he interrupted, “to say the over-exertion. Poor little thing!”

His face flushed, he bit his lips, and with a significant shrug of his shoulders left me before I had time to reply.

I can say for Susanne that she had never uttered one word of complaint, but I noticed that often, when Anna Marie wanted her, she was nowhere to be found, and that sometimes, after a long vain search, Klaus would quietly remark, “Perhaps she has run away.” Then



unexpectedly she would appear, with sparkling eyes and rosy cheeks, and tell us she had been lost in the woods, or fallen asleep in the garden. Again, she would lock herself in her own gloomy room, and, despite all our knocking, refuse to open the door. On one occasion, as she hastily drew her handkerchief from her pocket, a paper of bonbons fell upon the floor. Anna Marie, who detested all such tidbits, confiscated them immediately, and even yet I can see the reproving look she gave the blushing culprit.

Our evening meal was over, and we were all sitting on the porch. Klaus had been reading aloud, and, as usual, Susanne seemed to awaken from her dreams; she fastened her eyes intently on the reader, while a pretty pink color suffused her pale face. Klaus read from good old "Tante Voss" whatever he could find of interest about Berlin; there was no dissenting voice to this arrangement, although formerly he had always selected something of a political nature, something he could discuss with Anna Marie.

The telltale bonbon interrupted an account of a scene in an opera house, in which the celebrated songstress Sontag had received one encore after encore. Klaus lowered the paper, noticed his sister's look and gesture as she laid the unfortunate bonbon bag beside her, and observed also Susanne's embarrassment.

"Let me see the bag, Anna Marie" and unwrapping the gay paper from one of the candies, said, quietly, "Dear me, what miserable things! How they must

taste!" He laughed at the idea, but this proved too much for poor Susanne.

"I — I never eat them myself," she stammered. "I have them only for the little children who gather round the fence; they enjoy the sweets, and I like to make them happy. When I was little I thought nothing so good as a bonbon."

The excuse, in spite of her emotion, was so touchingly childish that, by way of reconciliation, Klaus extended his hand, saying, "Susanne, such poor candy is enough to poison even the village children. I will get some that is better, so good that perhaps you might like to taste it."

With seeming indifference Anna Marie rose, placed the dish of fragrant strawberries she had prepared for preserving on the great stone table, and went slowly down the steps into the garden. An hour passed, and when she returned the moon was shining over the gabled roof, and, with its silvery radiance, illumined the girl's proud, resolute face.

"Where is Susanne?" she asked. The child, too, had wandered into the garden, and Klaus, in undisturbed peace, was enjoying his favorite pipe. She quietly took her seat, and looked over the moonlit tree-tops into the warm summer night, then abruptly remarked, —

"I want to say something to you, Klaus."

"What is it, Anna Marie?"

"I want to ask you please not to give Susanne any

bonbons, or, in other words, not to oppose me so directly when I reprove the girl."

Klaus started and sat erect in his chair. "Anna Marie," he began, "I have never given you occasion to say that; nor have I found fault with your arrangements in regard to Fräulein Mattoni, nor have I ever opposed, although—" he stopped abruptly and shook the ashes from his pipe.

"Have I ever done anything to Susanne that displeased you?"

She received no response, for at that moment the object of dispute flew up the stairs, and decorously hastened to her seat. Anna Marie rose, took the shawl from her own shoulders, and, laying it round the breathless maiden, said, "You are overheated, Susanne. I am afraid you will take cold."

Klaus silently puffed away at his pipe, but when they parted for the night he extended both his hands to his sister, who, however, did not return his greeting in her usual loving way.

Alas, alas! the first indication of the impending evil I feared, small and scarcely worthy of notice, but nevertheless to my watchful eyes a confirmation of my presentiment. I do not know if Susanne obtained the promised bonbons. Probably not. For a time all went on in the same monotonous way, but at last there came a day so fraught with unforeseen and strange events that we were thrown into the greatest confusion and perplexity.

It was an oppressively warm day in the middle of harvest. Not a leaf stirred, and within and around the house a deathlike stillness prevailed. I sat in the large parlor in the deep embrasure of a window overlooking the garden and opening on the piazza. The heat did not penetrate the thick walls, and here at least it was refreshingly cool. High elms shaded the porch, and the luxuriant foliage of a wild vine afforded a grateful protection from the midday sun. This spot, always pleasant and comfortable, is still my favorite retreat in warm weather. Even if the piazza was not paved with colored mosaics, and could boast no artistically wrought iron railing, the time-worn sandstone flags, through which the grass and clover pushed their way, and the clumsy gray stone balustrade presented a far more picturesque appearance. What mattered it if no carved oak furniture stood around? The white varnished chairs in their pretty flowered-chintz covers served the same purpose, and were, I must confess, much more to my taste. We naturally cling to the old things. It's a pardonable weakness.

So I sat in the summer parlor, musing and napping, napping and musing, so lost in my own thoughts that only occasionally I noticed the voice of Anna Marie, who was making out her accounts, half aloud, in the adjoining room. Klaus had gone to the fields; the first crop of wheat was to be harvested to-day. I was waiting to give Susanne her promised lesson in needlework, but all to no purpose. She must be sleeping, I thought, and

rather hoped I was correct, for the extreme heat had deprived me of my usual energy. But soon a heavy foot-step roused me from my languor, and Klaus, dusty and flushed with the heat, entered the room. With an air of exhaustion he threw himself on a chair beside me, and, wiping the perspiration from his brow, asked, —

“Where is Susanne?”

“Sleeping, I presume.”

“But are you certain, Aunt Rose?”

“No, Klaus; but I think I am pretty safe in saying so — I know her.”

“It’s very strange,” he remarked. “I could have sworn I saw her disappear in the Dambitz woods.”

“You do not mean it,” I cried; “it’s impossible in this heat; it’s over an hour’s walk from here.”

“Just what I thought myself, but her gait, her every movement, the trim figure in black, — all made me certain it was she. I rode directly across the fields, but it was too late, no trace of her could I find.”

Jocosely I replied: “I’ll venture to say she’s either asleep in the old canopied bed, or gazing with wide-awake eyes at the mischief-maker.”

“Well, aunt,” said Klaus, waiving the subject, “I have news which I think will please you quite as much as it does me. I cannot speak for Anna Marie, but it’s three years now since the painful event.” With these words, he took a letter from the pocket of his linen coat, remarking reflectively, “Stürmer is back again, he has been here for several weeks, — I cannot understand —”

At that moment, something fell rattling to the floor, and Anna Marie, pale as death, stood in the doorway. With a frightened expression, she looked inquiringly at her brother. Never before had I seen the strong-minded girl appear so powerless. Klaus sprung forward, and I could hear her utter the one word, "Stürmer."

"He is here, Anna Marie," replied her brother; "was it such a shock to you?"

She shook her head negatively, but her face belied the "no."

"I will read you the letter I have just received," continued Klaus:

"MY DEAR OLD FRIEND:— It is two weeks since I returned to Dambitz. Every wanderer, I suppose, falls at last a prey to homesickness; but, certainly, after a man has travelled three long years, there are many and cogent reasons why he should once more return to his old home. I have come from— but we'll speak of all this when we meet. Already I have been twice at your door, to say 'How are you?' but— yet I cannot but hope that what once occurred will not interfere with our old friendly relations. I am the one who has had to conquer the past. It surely will not be hard for Anna Marie to welcome the friend of her early days; her friend I have never ceased to be, and hope always to remain. May I come? It was my intention to visit you after church to-morrow. Shall I carry it out? Kind regards to the ladies.

"Ever thine,

"EDWIN STÜRMER."

Brighter and brighter flamed the glow in my niece's cheeks, as Klaus proceeded with the letter. When he reached the words, "I am the one who had to conquer the past. It surely will not be hard for Anna Marie to welcome the friend of her early days," I noticed a

peculiar play of the muscles round her mouth, which betokened pain. Before he finished reading, however, she had recovered her usual composure. "I am glad Edwin Stürmer is coming," she said, clearly and distinctly; "ask him to stay and take supper with us."

"That's really good in you, Anna Marie," said Klaus, much pleased; "the poor fellow has, I hope, conquered his feelings; of course, the first meeting will naturally be a little painful, but neither of you has done anything wrong. It was not your fault that he loved you and you could not return his love. He is a splendid old fellow."

There was a peculiarly strange expression in Anna Marie's eyes, as she looked out over the green trees; she closed her lips firmly, as if to suppress a cry, and so remained while Klaus went to the secretary, to answer Stürmer's letter.

"Where is Susanne?" she asked at last.

"Probably sleeping," I responded.

Turning, she left the room.

"Klaus," I said, going over to him, "it seems to me somewhat of a risk to have Stürmer come here again."

"Why, dearest aunt? Anna Marie cares nothing about him. And he — nonsense, if he wasn't sure of his own heart, he wouldn't come; he simply wants to let us know the wound is healed."

"Do you know for a certainty that Anna Marie does not love him?"

He looked at me as if he wished to make sure I was still in possession of my reason. "I cannot understand,"



he continued, shaking his head; "if she loves him, why didn't she marry him. There was nothing in the world to prevent it. For pity's sake, do not imagine evils. I am only too glad to have a neighbor again, with whom we can talk of something else than the weather and the crops."

After all, he was right, and for a moment I did not know how such an idea had entered my mind.

Again Klaus started for the fields, and I sat waiting for Susanne. Again, stillness reigned, and naught was heard save the buzzing of the few flies upon the window pane. One hour passed, and then another, and ere I was aware the clock struck half-past six. Yes, I had been napping, — something elderly folks are prone to do. The setting sun was now peeping through the thick foliage, and one of its golden rays had roused me from my slumbers. Had Susanne been here? I rose and went to my room, then across to hers; she could not possibly have been asleep all this time.

No, she wasn't there, but gold and purple shadows, reflections from the western horizon, danced on the walls, and bunches of fragrant flowers gave an almost cosey look to the usually cheerless room. A wreath of corn flowers ornamented the mischief-maker's portrait, while a slanting ray of light gave a lifelike expression to the full red lips. Susanne's gauzy lace fichu lay in the middle of the floor, and on the sofa, thrust halfway under the pillow, I spied what seemed to be a letter. Feeling such curiosity was a privilege of maiden aunts, I picked up this

paper, noticed the stiff, homely handwriting, and in amazement read,—

“At three o’clock this afternoon in the Dambitz woods.”

It would be impossible to describe the thoughts that whirled through my brain. Klaus was right. But who had written this? Whom was Susanne to meet? I wondered and wondered; all kinds of strange fancies came into my mind and still Susanne had not returned; never before had she stayed away so long. The supper bell rang and for the first time in many weeks we three, worried at the child’s protracted absence, sat alone round the table. All the servants were questioned and some of the men sent to search for her along the Dambitz road.

I scarcely knew whether or not I should mention the letter, I should so much rather have spoken about it first to Susanne herself. Finally, I concluded to wait, thinking it the best way to avoid further perplexity and trouble. Anna Marie seemed the least annoyed and thought the girl had fallen asleep in the woods, and would certainly be back very soon. Still she must have felt anxious, for her trembling hands and glowing face betrayed her excitement.

Klaus rose without eating anything, and a few minutes later we heard the tramping of his horse’s hoofs over the garden stones, he too had gone in search of the truant. Anna Marie gave her orders for the next day in a languid voice, and I wandered alone along the dusky gar-

den path. It was an unusually warm August evening ; the moon was rising in a cloudless sky and gentle breezes played among the tree tops. From the court sounded the happy voices of the youthful laborers who, after the day's work, were enjoying their evening rest. Oh ! how many, many such evenings had I seen, but this one specially brought back precious recollections of my youth, my vanished youth, with its joys and sorrows. Every tree, every bush I had been familiar with from my earliest childhood, and all that life had brought to me was bound up in this spot of earth. This tender and beautiful feeling can be appreciated only by one who can say, "Here I was born, here I have lived, and here I shall die." In calm delight I seated myself on a stone bench at the end of the garden but, while enjoying the surrounding beauty, could not avoid feeling worried about Susanne. Suddenly I heard, not far from me, some one talking :

"Don't look so troubled — to-morrow, do you hear, Susie ? And be sure to wear that white dress to church ; I have special reasons for telling you to do so. And to-morrow afternoon I will come. I've waited long enough now, I can surely visit you sometimes ; but be sure not to mention it, darling. What shall you say when they ask where you have been all this time ?"

"Nothing at all," was the defiant answer. "I don't like to tell a lie and I won't do it, but I'm never coming again to Dambitz, it's entirely too far."

"Well, I do say !" responded a voice which I recognized

as that of the old actress. "Many a time I've held you in my arms and walked the floor the whole night long to quiet you. I thought nothing too hard to do for you, and now you won't come even this short distance for my sake. I think constantly of you and your future, and go to a great deal of trouble to make all my plans with a view of securing for you a happy lot in life. In order to be near you I am contented to live in a peasant's miserable hut, reeking with the scent of the cowstalls. I sew my eyes out and wear my fingers away, and you" — Here she broke down and heaved a deep sigh, which, it appeared to me, made not the slightest impression upon Susanne, for she vouchsafed no reply, either by word or look.

"Be a good girl, Susie; oh, do be good!" continued the old woman, "remember, only to-day I gave you that pretty little dress, look at it and you'll see how much work there is on it." Then lowering her voice she whispered something in Susanne's ear, and shortly after I saw the slender form rush quickly out of the grove and pass near me. She carried in her hand a small white package, and her round hat hung carelessly from her arm. Even in the darkness I could see the sparkling of her eyes and the flush upon her cheeks.

I rose quickly. I must speak to her before any one else saw her. "Susanne," I tried to call, but the name lingered on my lips, for on the very road along which she had just come stood, as if conjured there, a tall, manly form, and the sound of Klaus's earnest voice fell upon my ear, —

“Susanne! Thank God!”

Had I heard aright? They were very simple words, perhaps no stronger than any one would have uttered under the circumstances, but his tone betrayed not only anxiety but love—love, as warm and intense as this summer day.

Again I took my seat, supporting my dizzy head on my hands. “What shall I do? Klaus, Klaus,” I stammered, “how will it all end? This child—these two will never suit each other, it is impossible that he wishes to marry her, and yet how he seems to cherish her! What difficulties; what conflicts will arise if he even contemplates such a thing! God keep him safe from such a love; it is impossible, it cannot, must not be! O Susanne, would you had never entered this house!”

And all around me, through the trees, I heard the sympathetic moaning of the night wind. The full moon had risen and was bathing the fields and woods in a soft bluish white light, and, I fancied, was looking down on me with unusual tenderness. “Susanne is so young, so beautiful! Is it any wonder Klaus loves her? What has love to do with such scruples as mine? But then—alas, alas, Anna Marie!”

Much depressed I again rose, left the garden and started for the house, hoping to collect my thoughts in my own room. Klaus had, I supposed, some time ago escorted Susanne to Anna Marie, who would now ask where she had been. She would refuse to answer, as she so often had done, Anna Marie would speak harshly and

Klaus pace uneasily up and down the floor. Such scenes were not unusual, but this time nothing of the kind occurred. As I limped slowly along the road, my eye was attracted by a dark form on the stone bench under the linden. Was it Anna Marie, I wondered, was she waiting for Susanne? She was gazing intently into the dark, gathering shadows, and her pale face was even whiter than usual.

“Anna Marie,” I called, “Susanne is back again.” She sprang up and drew her veil quickly over her forehead, but not before I had seen the tears glittering in her eyes.

“Were you worried about her?” I asked as I leaned on her arm for support.

“Worried? Yes — no —” was the absent-minded response. “Didn’t you say Susanne was back again? O Aunt Rose, I knew she would soon return; she’s always running round; she delights in it. I’ve no doubt she inherits her roving disposition from her mother.”

“Anna Marie,” I called, half alarmed.

“Certainly, Aunt Rosamunde,” she repeated, “it’s born in her, it’s rooted in her nature, it gleams from her eyes. I have often noticed as she stood beside me, or sat opposite, busy with her work, the far-away look in her eyes, and her burning impatience to be through with her task and wander at her own sweet will. Nothing less, I think, than the consciousness that she must obey, would have prevented her from darting out and rambling in the open air. With such tastes she naturally embraces



every opportunity to rush out, throw herself under some shady pine, forget the past, and think nothing of the future. Happy creature to be so constituted, with no idea of system and devoid of all sense of responsibility !”

We were standing at the foot of the portico, and involuntarily I seized the baluster for support. Could it be Anna Marie who had spoken such words? Was the whole world turned upside down? In the soft moonlight I saw her lips quiver and tears drop from her eyes. Was there, then, something in my niece's life which she had cause bitterly to regret? Quickly, vividly as the lightning flash, the handsome face of Edwin Stürmer appeared before my mind.

“Anna Marie,” I stammered, “what did you say? How?”—But I could go no further, for the gentle tones of a woman's voice, full, sweet, and melodious, were wafted to us by the summer night's breeze; so wonderfully in keeping with the words were our thoughts and feelings, that we stood still and listened, while Anna Marie looked up to the open window in the upper story, and said, softly, “Susanne.”

“I've returned to my home, but still in my heart  
Burns a longing desire once more to depart.”

But what was wrong with Anna Marie? she had literally flown back into the garden. I stood waiting, the song had ceased. “Anna Marie,” I called, but no answer. My heart, my heart! what a never-to-be-forgotten evening! Anna Marie, who disliked nothing



more than sentimentality and foolish moonlight fancies, moved to tears through a plaintive little love song. To-day everybody seemed incomprehensible, Klaus, Susanne, and Anna Marie, but particularly my dear niece. How could I talk with her now about Susanne? I must still keep my discovery a secret. It would be best for me to go up and ask Susanne herself, for it was highly improbable that we should assemble this evening in the sitting-room; very unlikely that Anna Marie would feel like reading the evening prayer aloud as usual. And Klaus? No, I did not wish to see him; to-morrow, when he was himself again, when his voice, I hoped, would have lost the summer night's dreamlike tone—but not to-day. I had had enough. I certainly should not be able to sleep.

And so, like the spectral ancestress, ascending the moonlit staircase, I stole along the corridor and knocked gently at Susanne's door. No response; pressing the latch I stepped in. The room was redolent with the odor of flowers; through the window shone the clear, full moon, one of whose rays, brightening the white pillow on the bed, spread a soft mellow light over Susanne's countenance, and caused her arms and neck to look like polished marble. She slept soundly. Should I waken her? She would suffocate in this atmosphere. I opened a window and set the flowers on the balcony. Everything in the room was topsy-turvy, with the exception of her neat morning attire. That lay on the sofa, arranged with a show of order; the aforementioned

white dress, her little shoes and stockings, even her hat and hymn book, all in readiness for church on the morrow.

I closed the window, and noiselessly left her chamber. Yes, she might sleep on; even were she awake, it would have been impossible for us to talk rationally on this ill-fated evening. Yet, I have sometimes reproached myself for not rousing her from her dreams, and in my practical, prosaic way showing her the folly of her butterfly life. But what would it have availed? The Almighty God holds in his hands the threads of every life. All this was to be.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE next morning dawned as prosaically and soberly as one could have wished. The sun rose bright and clear, thrust its way into hidden nooks and corners, and placed everything unsparingly in the strongest light. Anna Marie's voice sounded from below as usual, and I overheard, "String beans for the domestics." Klaus whistled from the window, and forthwith began a dialogue about Waldmann the dog; he was limping over the garden, and according to the coachman's account, had had his paw crushed between the stable doors. With a feeling of relief, and smiling at my recent fears, I made ready for church. If only the first trying meeting with Stürmer was over, I argued, it might be a delightful Sabbath. I hoped, too, we should have some visitors, that our thoughts might not centre too much upon ourselves.

The first stroke of our church bell found the three members of our family waiting in the sitting-room for Susanne. Anna Marie appeared careworn and weary, and her face had almost lost its girlish look. She seemed nervous and excited, and was evidently annoyed at Susanne's tardiness. The air of earnestness and solemnity which usually pervaded her whole being on the sacred day of rest was sadly lacking. "Rieke," she

called, "go and ask Fräulein Mattoni if she is not ready. We are waiting for her." The girl returned with Susanne's reply, that she had not quite completed her toilette, and preferred that no one should wait for her.

"I shall wait for her," cried Klaus, with so much kindness and gallantry that his voice and manner reminded me of last evening.

"And for the first time you are willing," I playfully remarked, "to let your poor old aunt limp to the church alone."

"Pardon me," he speedily replied, "my aunt is not old yet; so far as that is concerned, I could easily let her go alone, but I—may I have the honor?" he inquired, reaching me his arm.

Anna Marie preceded us; there was something majestic in her carriage, as, stepping out of the garden, she went through the churchyard gate, and passed round and between the long rows of graves. She saluted the peasants with a bow and smile, gave a friendly stroke to the flaxen heads of the children, and here and there spoke a cheering word to some aged man or woman. All eyes followed her with respectful admiration, but Klaus received more confidential looks and demonstrative greetings. Seated in the old family pew, she bowed her head reverently in prayer, and after a long supplication cast a furtive glance at the opposite gallery, where sat the lords and ladies of Dambitz.

For years Dambitz and Bütze had been served by the same pastor, and many and sacred were the occasions on

which the Dambitzers on that side and the Hegewitzers on this had together listened to simple holy words from the servant of the Lord. Often in trusting humility had they together kneeled in prayer to their heavenly Father. Those were good old times when the families of the manors, by their own example, taught the people to "fear the Lord and honor the king."

Suddenly a thrill of life passed through Anna Marie's whole being; her gaze was still fixed on the Dambitz pew, but her countenance remained unchanged. With a slight nod she returned a greeting from some one on that side, and at that moment I caught sight of my old favorite. Yes, there he stood. Again and again, I nodded and motioned stealthily with my handkerchief; his dark eyes returned a joyous greeting, and now I realized that Edwin Stürmer was really here.

The clear, firm voice with which Anna Marie joined in the song of praise drew my attention once more to her; despite outward calmness, her crimsoned cheeks betrayed inward emotion. Without doubt it had been painful for her to see him again.

Of the preaching on that memorable day I can give no account, for before the pastor entered the chancel an event occurred which interrupted the usual solemnity of services and compelled me to leave the church.

It was during the singing. I had been watching Stürmer closely, as if I could not be satisfied to turn away my eyes from his handsome curly head. I think I shall be forgiven, for I loved Edwin as though he were my own

child. I noticed him start, and look anxiously towards me; following the direction of his eyes, I saw Susanne. Her dress was of soft, airy white; her neck and arms were covered, not concealed, by the thin gauzy material; she held her hat in her hand, and a rose of spotless purity nestled in the black hair, which hung in waving tresses round her shapely head. A cluster of white, half-blown buds rose and sank with the heaving of her breast, and her face, when she raised it after a short prayer, was as pale as the flowers she wore.

Wondrously beautiful was this young creature; may God forgive me, but I felt angry that she was so charming, and vexed that she had come to the house of God in such holiday attire. "Incorrigibly low blood," I muttered, and feeling thankful that Klaus could not see her from his seat, gave Stürmer a disapproving look for keeping his eyes so steadily fastened on our pew. Just as the minister began the liturgy, Susanne raised her hand to her forehead, closed her eyes, and sank back in her seat, unconscious.

All the strange occurrences of that morning I cannot now recall; but I remember distinctly the noise of a falling stool, the clergyman for a moment ceasing to speak, the excitement among the congregation, and that Klaus instantly rushed from our seat and lifted the unconscious girl in his arms, with seemingly as much ease as he would pick up a feather. I rose to follow them. Anna Marie's head was bent low over her hymn book, as if she wished to see nothing more; yet she rose hesitatingly,

and stepped behind me down the small creaking staircase which led from our pew to the outside of the church. As a shelter against storm and wind, this was provided with a wooden roof, from which the ivy, covering all the church walls, hung in graceful festoons, giving it the appearance of a wedding gate.

Klaus disappeared in one of the small neighboring houses, whose shining window-panes peeped out from under the gray shingled roof, like bright eyes that seemed not at all dimmed by the constant outlook on the little graveyard. Here, Marieken Mårtensen lived with her husband, Gottlieb. From Bütze she had gone forth to her bridal. Since that time my niece and I had stood sponsors to two of her little brown curly-heads, and whenever we were pressed with work and needed extra help, Marieken always came to our assistance.

Drying her hands on her clean apron and pushing back her oldest child, she came to the threshold to meet us. "She is lying on the sofa," she whispered, "and, gracious me! Mr. Klaus looks as pale as a corpse." Motioning me to remain outside, Anna Marie stepped into the little room. I seated myself on the wooden bench Marieken had placed in the hall, and listened breathlessly to every sound within.

For a short time all was quiet, but as Marieken ran in with fresh water I heard my niece's voice, "How do you feel, Susanne?"

"Please go back to church," she responded; "it is



nothing, I felt weak, that was all, I am very sorry to have caused you so much anxiety and trouble."

The next moment with face all aglow, she stood in the doorway, then, without noticing me, darted past, out through the front hall and across the churchyard. In the frame of the high gateway leading into our garden. the receding white form showed once more, then vanished.

With a dubious shake of the head, I started to go into the room to learn what was to be done next. Stunned, however, by the cuttingly cold tone of Klaus's voice, I hastened to my seat.

"Hereafter, Anna Marie, I want you to try to give the girl more suitable employment; her swooning away to-day is only the natural result of continued over-exertion."

I could not imagine how Anna Marie looked at that moment; never before had Klaus so addressed her. My old heart beat violently from anxiety. "There it is!" I said. "It must come."

"In my opinion this is only the result of her own folly, — racing around in the terrible heat yesterday," was her cutting reply; "but it shall be as you wish, I will give all the arrangements over into your hands, and let you decide what occupations are best suited to Susanne Mattoni."

"I will consult with the doctor about it to-morrow," responded Klaus.

"I am satisfied; from this time Susanne shall be entirely under your care."

“Good heavens, Anna Marie! Can’t you, won’t you understand?” asked Klaus, beseechingly; “don’t you see the child is delicate, accustomed to an easy-going life of pleasure, and has never been tied down by systematic rules? I beg of you not to think hard of me, it is my opinion, and” —

“I am very sorry that I have made such a mistake,” she freezingly interrupted. “I tried to do what I deemed best for this unfortunate, untrained child. I wanted to make her a good, industrious, home-loving maiden, but I see the miserably low blood flowing in her veins cannot be improved. I have only one request to make.”

She paused. What would come next? Horrified, I looked around to see that no one heard. Marieken was rattling away at the pots and kettles in the kitchen, while the children were playing about the door.

“That you will not expect me to live with such a frivolous, vain, characterless being. I could not endure it,” she continued.

“So that is your decision, Anna Marie?” asked Klaus, threateningly. “I tell you, Susanne Mattoni is to remain in our house; I wish it because I am bound by a sacred promise, and I hope you will never let her know your opinion of her. For her frivolity, her butterfly life—for all the weaknesses you have recounted, she is not responsible, having never been taught to regard them as failings. Of her frivolity at

least I have never had any proof; a few bonbons do not constitute frivolity."

"I cannot act against my convictions," returned Anna Marie; "if I cannot train Susanne as I deem best for her own good, it will be better for you to find her another home."

I had sprung up and seized the latch of the door, there was no disputing the fact that they were quarrelling. The gathering storm had at last broken.

"I tell you Susanne Mattoni is to stay!" cried Klaus, in an angry tone. "Do you forget who is master in this house? I am afraid I have made a great mistake in allowing you all these years to rule and reign, passively accepting all your arrangements. It is time to remind you that I am the one to say what is to be done in Bütze."

Alas, alas! my knees trembled, my whole frame quivered. "How will it end?" There was no further sound from within, only from the kitchen I heard the soft lullaby of the young mother as she rocked her babe to sleep; I slipped quietly back from the door and resumed my place on the wooden bench in the hall. Over the quiet green hills of the churchyard lay a holy Sabbath rest, unbroken save by the whispering of the wind in the tall trees. The preaching was over, the preaching of the fifth Sunday after Trinity. The pealing of the organ and the singing of the congregation were wafted to me by the summer breeze, and my lips uttered my heart's wish as I repeated the precious words, —

“Abide with us, thou glorious One,  
Thou of all light the source,  
And with thy light make plain our way,  
Mark out for us our course.”

“Light, truth, and peace, O give us these in our day of trouble.” I knew Klaus, I knew Anna Marie, with her rigid ideas of duty, her iron will when she felt she was in the right, her inflexibility (that was the Hegewitz character), excellent qualities if they work peaceably together. Just then Stürmer came out of the church door, he had not waited for the singing but was hurrying towards me.

“Fräulein Rosamunde, are you still here?” he asked.  
“Who” —

But I did not allow him to finish. “Come, give me your arm, Edwin; I’ve just been waiting for some one to take me home,” and almost drawing him on, we succeeded in reaching the Park without his having the least idea that Klaus and Anna Marie were in Marieken’s house.

“We are heartily glad to have you back again, dear Edwin,” I said, drawing a deep breath, as we walked along under the shady trees. “How have you been? It’s delightful to have you here again. How well and strong you look.”

He stooped and kissed my hand, saying: “Yes, I am very thankful to be among my old friends once more. And how are you all here? But why do I ask — well of course, at least you all appeared so in church. But I

want to ask, even at the risk of being thought too curious, who was the young lady who? Oh" — and stopping a moment he pointed to the little grove before us, while he pressed my arm, urging me to stand still.

There, almost hidden by the dense foliage, sat Susanne, motionless as a statue. Her white arms were partially covered by the elbow sleeves, and her oval face rested on her clasped hands. Here and there a golden ray of sunshine danced upon the white figure, and so touchingly sorrowful was her expression, so tear-stained her lovely countenance, that my heart melted with tenderness.

"Poor child," I sighed involuntarily, and drawing Stürmer away from the scene, briefly satisfied his curiosity. "She is the daughter of Professor Mattoni, who, you remember, was Klaus's tutor."

My head swam, I did not know what to-day might yet bring forth.

"Is she making her home with you?" he inquired.

"Yes — no," I replied, hesitatingly, scarcely knowing how to answer. I was trying to reach the piazza and summer parlor as quickly as possible, when to my surprised delight, Klaus, coming to welcome his guest, met us in the doorway. An unobserving person could scarcely have perceived the little cloud that shadowed his brow. Leaving them I went to Anna Marie's room, but, seeing no trace of her there, hastened to the sitting-room, where I found her pale, but calm and composed. The meeting between her and Stürmer I was glad to

have missed, but I was in time to see him pending speechless over her hands.

My niece was a riddle I could not solve; the passionate outbreak of yesterday was to me as incomprehensible as to-day's persistent opposition. The latter I might understand, for already she must have seen the light from the kindled flame in her brother's heart. But she was taking the wrong way; no man of gallantry would thrust a poor helpless woman out of a house where she had found shelter, merely because he was told to do so, particularly not if she was young and beautiful as Susanne — and he already loved her. To me the fact was indisputable. Klaus loved the girl. Perhaps he was scarcely conscious himself how much, but that he loved her I felt and knew.

It was in a not altogether pleasant frame of mind that I went to the table. "This is the beginning of the end, what will the end be?" I asked, with a heavy heart. It was a strange dinner. Susanne excused herself, Klaus had very little to say; Anna Marie forced herself to be unnaturally talkative and amiable, but the little bright spot on her cheek revealed her suppressed emotion.

Mrs. Brockelmann's announcement of the sudden arrival of the old actress was really a surprise to me, for I had forgotten all about her. Anna Marie heard it with apparent indifference, but Klaus, watching his sister closely, gave orders to serve dinner for Isabella. Stürmer entertained us with accounts of his travels, and while the coffee was being served, Pastor Grüne dropped



in. Before long the gentlemen fell into a scientific discussion about the Pompeiian excavations, at which Stürmer had on different occasions been present. Anna Marie paced slowly up and down the piazza, now and then casting a wistful glance through the open parlor window, at the gentlemen within.

I rested under the shadow of the vine-covered roof, knitting, but my eyes followed my niece. She wore a light blue linen dress, and an airy white cape, thrown gracefully round her shoulders, half concealed, half revealed their beautiful contour, while the heavy braids of her fair hair, glistening in the fading sunlight, enhanced the beauty of her fresh, blooming complexion. Anna Marie had bestowed unusual care upon her dinner toilette to-day. She was a true type of a northern German, tall, blonde, slender, bright-eyed, and strikingly cool and self-possessed.

Suddenly she stopped directly before me. "Aunt Rosamunde, do you think that Susanne Mattoni has been in any way overworked? I mean, do you think her fainting is attributable to such a cause?"

"Yes, Anna Marie, I am convinced of it. She was unaccustomed to work, and in her close city quarters lived like a caged bird; now you know when a bird long confined is suddenly freed, and attempts to fly, it is very apt to lame its poor, unpractised wings."

There was no word of response, but she resumed her pacing up and down. The conversation within became more animated, as the gentlemen were enjoying their



Rhine wine. The sun had disappeared behind a wall of clouds, and a cool evening wind was fanning the leaves and branches.

“Why, Stürmer, you are going to stay all the evening?” sounded the voice of my nephew from within. “You mustn’t think of leaving at such an early hour. You are not going back on our good old custom.”

Anna Marie paused to listen, but instead of an answer she heard only the pushing back of the chairs, and Klaus saying, —

“Well, Susanne, are you quite well again? Come, let me introduce you to Baron Stürmer.”

Anne Marie turned, and looked out into the garden.

Pastor Grüne also inquired kindly for the girl’s health; soon all four came out on the piazza. Susanne stepped up immediately to Anna Maria, and, extending her hand, said, “Pardon me for startling you all so in the church; I do not know how it happened, but everything commenced to swim before my eyes, and” —

“Oh, never mind,” interrupted Anna Marie, touching the tips of the maiden’s fingers. “I wasn’t at all frightened; fainting is not so very uncommon.”

A deep crimson burned in Susanne’s face, but she quietly seated herself by my side.

“Has Isa gone yet?” I asked.

She nodded. “More than half an hour ago.”

“Where is she living now?”

“In Dambitz,” was the reply.

In astonishment I let my work slip from my fingers. "How does that happen?" I asked.

"S—— was so far away, Fräulein Rosamunde," stammered the girl, shyly, "so she rented a room in a blacksmith's house in Dambitz. She says she sees very little of the people, that the soot and dirt do not annoy her, and she has a beautiful view from her window, which opens on the Dambitz gardens. You don't care if she lives there; that's far enough from Bütze — isn't it?"

"She may live where she chooses, Susanne; of course it is not our place to lay down rules and regulations for her."

In the meantime, Mrs. Brockelmann had prepared our supper on the porch, and we had taken our seats. On the table burned four *Windlichter* (Chinese lanterns), whose flickering flames, fanned by the breezes, cast a soft, subdued light upon Susanne's beautiful face. Her white toilet was restored to its original freshness, and a bunch of newly plucked roses replaced those which had withered and faded. One could see that Isabella had given the child a helping hand.

She occupied the seat between Klaus and myself, Stürmer and Anna Marie sat on the opposite side. A dish of luscious strawberries graced the table. As Susanne imbibed long draughts of the sparkling water, a delicate pink color gradually mounted into her cheeks, and her dark orbs kindled with light and life. Then, all unexpectedly, came the merry jest, the glee, the mirthful laugh; once more she was in her native element. Oh,

how she laughed! Never have I heard another laugh like Susanne Mattoni's; so softly and musically it ran through all the tones of the gamut, that one was drawn in unawares, and unwittingly compelled to take part in it. Her parted lips displayed teeth of pearly whiteness, and from the rosy mouth issued, in response to Klaus's badinage, incessant streams of soft, bewitching nonsense. As she raised her glass to drink with Stürmer, I noticed the look Klaus gave her, a look which spoke more clearly than yesterday's voice of melting tenderness.

Anna Marie sat speechless, with not the least semblance of a smile, but evidently disgusted with the idle, frivolous talk. Susanne, however, had a majority on her side; for even the venerable pastor made no attempt to conceal his enthusiastic admiration for her.

I tried to devise some plan by which I could bring the little red mouth to cease its prattle, but in vain. At last what seemed a bright idea flashed into my mind. "Susanne!" I called, interrupting another peal of laughter, "won't you favor us with a little song? I heard you singing very nicely last evening."

"Please not, mademoiselle; I can't sing before so many people."

But the gentlemen insisted, and Stürmer proposed extinguishing the lights, saying music always sounded much sweeter by moonlight.

"Yes, yes," she merrily cried, "then I will sing." Instantly the rosy lights disappeared, and the pale moon shed its silvery beams over the white-robed maiden,

who had sprung up, and was standing beside the balustrade.

“What shall I sing,” she asked, “Italian or German?”

“German, German!” called the gentlemen.

“Please, Susanne,” I begged, “let us have the same song you sang last evening. Anna Marie and I did not understand all the words, and we want to hear them.”

Anna Marie rose suddenly, but, on second thought, resumed her place. Stürmer had turned his chair, and was gazing steadily at Susanne, who, supporting herself against the baluster, commenced the same soft, sweet melody we had heard yesterday:—

“I wandered the world over, far and wide,  
Yet never could cast my sorrow aside.  
I returned to my home, but still in my heart  
Burned a longing desire once more to depart;  
Till I gazed again in your eyes so true,  
And felt that my heart still belonged to you.  
Neither lock, bolt, nor wall could have kept me here,  
Naught save your sweet self, so pure and so dear.  
'Twould be easy to mount my fiery steed,  
And rush off once more at former speed;  
Swift ships soon would bear me away from the shore,  
But I've seen you again; I'll wander no more.”

Alarmed, I looked at Anna Marie. Her countenance was turned from me, but, by the tightly clasped, trembling white hands, I could plainly see the depths to which her soul had been stirred. Who had ever thought

of such a song? And Stürmer? He had risen and gone to Susanne's side.

"Another song, Fräulein," he demanded; "give us another. You are entirely too young for such melancholy music."

"The Germans know no other songs, Herr Baron," rejoined Pastor Grüne. "All their airs are mournful, generally bemoaning a false, or bewailing a lost love. Let our nation keep them; one such little German melody is to me far sweeter than a dozen French songs."

Stürmer made no response, and a painful silence ensued.

Susanne at length asked, "Would you like me to sing something humorous?"

"Yes," cried Klaus, "something lively, a hunting or drinking song." Embarrassed by what seemed to strike so near home, he had risen and refilled the glasses.

Susanne began, in brisk, merry rhythm: —

"One bright clear morning early,  
I started off for the chase,  
Along the winding pathway  
That led by my sweetheart's place.

"I looked up at the window,  
To catch a glance of her eye,  
Thinking 'twould surely bring good luck,  
That bonny, sweet face to spy.

"'Tis vain; she still lies sleeping,  
From care and trouble free.  
What's that? I hear a laughing  
From beneath the apple tree.

- “ And blithesome as the morning,  
 As rosy and as fair,  
 I saw my well-beloved,  
 My treasure, standing there.
- “ She laughed, and then she beckoned,  
 And gayly called, ‘ Good speed.’  
 Yet all that day, strange to say,  
 I could in nothing succeed.
- “ What made me shoot so poorly?  
 What ailed my powder and ball?  
 Despite my best endeavors,  
 I killed — just nothing at all.”

Susanne stopped suddenly, as if exhausted, and drew a long breath; the merry laugh was momentarily silenced.

“ Go on, go on,” called the gentlemen. “ Surely that’s not all of it?” asked Stürmer.

“ No, that cannot be the end of it,” asserted Pastor Grüne. Taking another long breath, she continued: —

- “ But once more I passed the house,  
 Going again to the chase,  
 And at my darling’s window  
 Saw her old grandmother’s face.
- “ The grey head shook and trembled,  
 But her heart was kind and true;  
 She wished me every blessing,  
 Said, ‘ May good luck go with you.’
- “ Her words were very friendly,  
 But I wished her far away —  
 For I feared she’d bring me evil,\*  
 Yet I missed no shot that day.

\* The German hunters consider it a bad omen to meet an old woman while out shooting.

“When to my love I told this,  
She merrily laughed outright;  
And her winsome, bonny face  
Was a picture of delight.”

At the conclusion of the song, Susanne broke into a peal of laughter so charming and irresistible that we found ourselves involuntarily participating in it.

“Well, that’s enough,” she cried at last. “But oh, it’s such fun to hear you all laughing with me. I’ve often tried to make Isa laugh when she was going to scold me, but now” — she paused suddenly; “it’s so long since I felt like laughing, I was afraid I had forgotten how;” then after another merry little strain, she added, “but I’m thankful it seems quite natural, yet.”

Anna Marie rose and went into the summer parlor, as though suddenly remembering something there that claimed her attention. She had not returned when Stürmer and Pastor Grune were about leaving, but, as they expressed a wish to bid her good night, Klaus started in search of her. She was nowhere to be found, neither downstairs nor in her own room, so the gentlemen were obliged to leave without seeing her.

“You must excuse Anna Marie, dear Edwin,” I heard Klaus say, apologetically, “she did not, I am sure, expect you to leave so soon. You certainly are in a great hurry.”

It was true he was leaving unusually early, he had scarcely spoken during the latter part of the evening. I thought perhaps the first song had depressed his



spirits; its melody and words still ring in my ears; it was an unfortunate selection.

Long after Susanne had retired, Klaus and I were standing face to face in the sitting-room. I had determined to tell him about my discovery of last evening, for I was convinced it would be imprudent to say anything further about Susanne to Anna Marie.

“Klaus,” I began, as with folded hands and careworn face, he paced slowly up and down the room, “Klaus, do you know where the old actress is living now?”

Stopping a moment, he replied, “I know nothing about her, it’s a matter of perfect indifference to me where she lives. Pardon me, I have so much to think about.”

I kept quiet and reasoned with myself. “Well, after all, it really makes no difference, whether he knows or not.”

Turning and facing me he then asked, “Aunt, what do you think of Anna Marie? I cannot understand the way she is acting.”

“Neither of you can understand the other,” I retorted, somewhat sharply. He reddened slightly. “That may be,” he said, stroking his face with his hand.

“Klaus,” I continued, “do not let this go any further; do not allow the ill feeling between yourself and your sister to take root. You are the older, and a man of good common sense.”

“No, aunt, no; I am in the right this time,” was his

excited reply. "You do not know what occurred early this morning."

He paused abruptly, pretending to busy himself with the papers on the table, for Anna Marie had that moment entered the room. She wore a white apron, and carried the basket of keys on her arm. The housekeeper followed with the silver which had been in use that day, but was now brightly polished and ready to be stored again in the case. Opening the carved cupboard, Anna Marie proceeded to lay the shining pieces one by one in their proper place.

Klaus had seated himself and was turning over the leaves of the paper. From the open windows I could see, beyond the barn and stables, occasional flashes of heat lightning. The clock had already struck the midnight hour, but I was still wide awake, I could not and would not leave the two alone to-night, they must not speak to each other again about Susanne.

Just then Anna Marie closed the closet and walked towards her brother. "Klaus," she said, gently, "do not let this breach grow wider; let us talk the matter over quietly."

Laying aside his paper, he gazed at her in astonishment. A look of tenderness lighted up her face, and her manner was almost beseeching.

"With pleasure, dear sister," he replied, rising from his seat. "Do you mean in regard to Susanne's future occupation? Have you something new to suggest?"

"Yes," she said, firmly; and, after a pause, began, "I

quite agree with you that much physical exertion is not good for Susanne, but a life of dreamy idleness would be much more injurious to her. Believe me, brother, I am not prejudiced in this matter, for I do not dislike Susanne, though I acknowledge we are not congenial. I must repeat what I said this morning, 'Let her go away from here. Find her another home; this one is not suitable for her; do it for the girl's own sake.'

She spoke pleadingly, and, advancing towards him, laid her hand on his shoulder. "Have you anything further to remark?" he asked, nervously stroking his beard. "Pray, where do you wish to banish the child for her good?"

"Place her in a good boarding-school; let her prepare herself for a teacher; she is poor, and that is an honorable occupation; or" —

"You are evidently thinking of Fräulein Lenon, Anna Marie," answered Klaus; "I can recall very clearly her honorable position when she was obliged to stand in opposition to your persistent stubbornness. If there ever was a being unsuited to assume the martyrdoms of a teacher, that being is Susanne."

Deeply wounded by the sarcastic allusion to her childish obstinacy, her face assumed a ghastly hue, but she spoke not a word.

"Perhaps," he continued, "you would like to make an actress of her, because she happens to have a fine voice and sings charmingly." He threw down the paper and sprang up. "I am unspeakably annoyed, Anna Marie,

to think that you have dared to repeat this proposition ; I must confess I was not prepared for this. What induces you to cherish such hostile feelings towards Susanne ? Do you, in the happy security of your own home, realize what it means for a young, inexperienced girl to be thrown alone on the world — to be friendless ? Surely you do not. You work and toil, are faithful in the performance of every task, but you work as mistress ; you are above the petty annoyances of life — they cannot assail you. Yes, I know hundreds are compelled to submit to them, and hundreds perhaps never realize what they are obliged to forego, but this child would feel it deeply ; she would become miserably unhappy.”

Hesitating a moment he looked at Anna Marie. She returned his gaze with a cold, fixed stare, and an almost scornful laugh. Klaus was enraged, and, with a face crimsoned with anger, continued, —

“Of course you cannot appreciate this, Anna Marie ; you have everything but a heart — that you never possessed. You can do anything save that which most ennobles and glorifies a woman — love ; that you cannot. It grieves me deeply to see you deprived of a woman’s sweetest charm. Love and pity go hand in hand. I could not imagine you a loving wife or tender mother. How, then, could I expect you to sympathize with a strange child ? ”

“Klaus, for heaven’s sake stop ! ” I cried, in alarm, as I saw my niece grow deathly pale, and stare vacantly out

past her brother into the darkness beyond. She uttered not a word in self-defence.

Motioning me away, he continued, talking more rapidly than before, "The time has come when I must speak, Anna Marie. Being your guardian, I have the right, and feel it a duty to do so. Alas! I blame myself for allowing you to follow the dictates of your own free will so long. You have taken advantage of me, and have grown cold and hard. As I said before, I cannot think of you as a fond wife or loving mother. That delight you will never know, for you would never subordinate your will to another. You would never commit a quick, thoughtless action. You would never be able to make a sacrifice purely for love's sweet sake, because you do not understand what love means. It made my heart ache to look at Edwin Stürmer to-day. If ever a man was worthy of a woman's love it is he, but you allowed him to go, and would permit Susanne to do likewise, without a single feeling of regret, because you have no heart" —

"Stop, stop, Klaus," sounded the distressed voice of Anna Marie, as with outstretched arms she flew towards him. "Say no more, not another word; I cannot endure it." She tried to say something further, but her lips trembled, she was unable to utter a sound, and the next moment rushed from the room.

"Oh, Klaus," I said, weeping, "you were too harsh. You really have no occasion to use such language to your sister." But I stood alone with my tears; Klaus, too,

had left the room, slamming the door after him, refusing, for the first time, to listen to his aunt's entreaties.

Yes, I was alone; I believed myself in a dream. Was this the old familiar room at Bütze, in which peace had so long dwelt? The light flickered on the table. Through the open casement window blew a chilling breeze, and in the distance rolled the thunder. No — it seemed like another place; peace had flown, and in its stead had entered injustice, bitterness, and sorrow; and that bitterness had already separated two loving hearts. In the room above, a beautiful young girl lay sleeping, while the picture of the mischief-maker smiled upon her, as if rejoicing that she had found a successor. Yes, Klaus is right, and Anna Marie is right; but how can they ever be made to understand each other? How soon a thoughtless bitter word may be spoken which a lifetime of repentance cannot recall!

## CHAPTER IX.

THAT night I could not sleep, and in the gray dawn of early morning I rose and seated myself at the window, while my troubled heart pondered over and over what had recently occurred, and what I knew must yet come. How dearly I loved both the children! God knows I would gladly have given years of my useless life if thereby I might have obliterated the unpleasant incidents of the last month. Everything seemed to be in the dark; Anna Marie was reserved and uncommunicative; and Klaus — what could he do? He could not come and say, “Aunt Rosamond, I love Susanne and intend to marry her.” I should have thrown up my hands in astonishment, and laughed at the idea. Klaus, the last of the family of Hegewitz, and Susanne Mattoni, the child of an obscure soubrette! Klaus himself would have laughed also.

It was a rainy day which dawned at last, but a refreshing breeze came through the open casement, while the lindens sighed and the rain pattered on the roofs. The milkmaids, with their newly-filled pails, hurried across the barnyard; the hungry fowls were fed; Mrs. Brockelmann passed from room to room directing servants, and the overseer walked over to the granaries;



everything went on in the usual way, yet how different it all seemed.

Suddenly a carriage rolled through the gate (I started, for it was ours, drawn by our two brown horses), stopped before the front steps, and Klaus rushed from the house, and greeted the gentleman who alighted. I had leaned out of my window, but now drew back in amazement. Good heavens! it was the doctor, our old family physician, Dr. Reuter, and so early in the morning. My first thought was Anna Marie. I ran upstairs, and saw her stepping out of Susanne's room. She still wore the blue linen dress of yesterday, but on her large white apron I noticed several blood stains.

"Susanne?" I stammered. Nodding, she reached me her hand. "Go in, aunt, I want to speak to Dr. Reuter; Susanne is ill."

As one stunned, I allowed myself to be gently pushed through the open door. The windows were darkened, but on the mantelpiece burned a light whose flickering flame showed me Susanne's face, and revealed the burning fever which had developed during the night. Her eyes were wide open, yet she did not recognize me, but thought I was Isa.

"Isa, I did sing; don't be angry, but it was lovely in the moonlight, and it did not hurt me at all." Again she began to sing,—

"I returned to my home, but still in my heart  
Burned a longing desire once more to depart."

Then rubbing her little hands over her white night-dress, she said, "Take those red flowers away, Isa."

I covered the blood stains with a white towel. Poor child! This explained the fainting, the prolonged rippling laugh, the sweet singing; yes, the fever had been in her system then.

At that moment, Dr. Reuter entered the room, and stepped up to the bedside. Anna Marie stood behind him with a look of anxious expectation in her pale face, while from the hall I heard through the half-opened door a deep breathing that must have come from Klaus. The doctor held Susanne's hand for a long time, carefully counting her pulse. He was a man of few words, and it was with difficulty one could ascertain from him the real condition of the patient. At last he turned to Anna Marie.

"A miserably frail constitution, the girl is delicate enough to put under a glass case; she should be wrapped in cotton and sent to the south; she should never be allowed to exert herself, but live the life of a princess; then, perhaps, we might make something out of her. But at present," and, drawing out his watch, he again took the little hand in his, "at present, we have enough to do here; who is going to nurse this child?"

"Doctor, do you think that physical exertion,—I mean rising early and taking an active part in household affairs, could have brought on this trouble?" asked Anna Marie, with tremulous voice.

"Getting up at four o'clock, going from the kitchen to

the cold dairy, and later in the day being exposed to the heat of the sun on the bleaching grounds, — such things do you mean ?” he asked. “Certainly, the surest way of injuring such lungs. Fräulein, I should think you could have known that yourself.”

Anna Marie grew paler.

“But day before yesterday, she walked an hour and a half in the hot sun, and in the evening sang several songs,” I interposed, for I pitied my niece.

“That capped the climax,” declared the old gentleman ; “singing is very injurious, she must never try it again. Are you going to nurse her, Fräulein von Hege- witz ?” he queried.

“No, I am,” responded Anna Marie.

“Isa, Isa !” called Susanne.

“Do you know where she lives ?” asked my niece, as Dr. Reuter stepped out to write the prescription.

“In Dambitz,” I responded, with a heavy heart. Anna Marie manifested no surprise, but requested me to remain in the room till she could change her dress and send a messenger for Susanne’s former attendant. In a short time she returned, — returned to remain at the bedside of the sick child, for, strange to say, Isabella Pfannenschmidt did not come.

Anna Marie had sent Mrs. Brockelmann to Dambitz, in the wagon, expecting she would bring the old woman back with her. In the meanwhile, Susanne, with her thin, wan hands, pushed Anna Marie from her bedside, and in her paroxysms of fever called incessantly, “Isa !

Isa!" Anna Marie, with a pale face, placed her chair behind the curtains, and listened to the low, impulsive whispering of her patient. Once, as in her delirium she distinctly mentioned Klaus's name, the blood mounted into Anna Marie's face, and I saw her almost reproachfully fasten her eyes on the door, behind which we had just heard a soft, gentle step.

Yes, Klaus was there again. Twenty times in the day he came to listen at the door; oh! could some one only have silenced that little mouth. Again she called aloud his name, at the same time laughing and talking of bonbons, the moonlight, and the songs she had sung.

On my way to my own room I met Mrs. Brockelmann who, having just returned, was standing talking to Klaus. Flushed with excitement, she began in half-suppressed, angry tones, to describe to us what she had found in the apartment of the old actress, who was absent from home. The blacksmith's wife informed her that the old woman had recently made another supply of red pomade, which she had just packed into little porcelain jars, and carried off to sell, and said moreover, that when on such business she frequently remained away twelve or fourteen days. "She is an old vagabond," added Mrs. Brockelmann, "a beggar that the officers would do well to arrest." Then with a disdainful look, she drew out one of the above-mentioned little jars, wrapped in gilt paper and bearing a label which announced the merits of the red pomade: *Rouge de théâtre, première qualité.*"

"A cosmetic," I said, with a smile.

“Yes, and she makes lots of money from the miserable stuff,” continued Mrs. Brockelmann, “and what does she do with it? Buys cakes and chocolate for herself, and gaudy ribbons for the towsy-headed children. You ought to have seen the quantities of rubbish lying round the room; there was enough to decorate the caps of ten fools — oh, it’s a burning shame.”

“When is she coming back?” asked Klaus.

“The dear knows, she only started yesterday.” Mrs. Brockelmann turned angrily around, as if greatly vexed at the loss of her valuable time and the fruitlessness of her mission. As she paused for a moment at the door, a more friendly expression crept over her face. “I forgot to give you Herr Baron Stürmer’s compliments,” she said; “he was not a little surprised, when he saw me looking out of the old witch’s window into his garden, but I soon explained what I was doing there.”

“Is the house so near his grounds?” I asked.

Mrs. Brockelmann nodded assent. “Yes, indeed, the old creature has a splendid view of his garden, and a magnificent garden it is!” and with these words she finally departed.

“On the whole,” said Klaus, after a pause, “it is better Isabella was not there. But will Mrs. Brockelmann be able to nurse the child?”

“No,” I responded, “but Anna Marie will.”

“Anna Marie?” he asked, and his lips quivered.

“Klaus,” I begged, “do not deceive yourself. You know in your innermost heart you are convinced that

no better nurse than Anna Marie could be found for this child."

"I have not understood my sister of late," he sulkily responded.

"Nor she you, Klaus," I quickly rejoined.

His face glowed. "Why?" he hastily asked, "because I have taken that poor girl under my protection. because I have protested against her strength being over-taxed? because" — He paused.

"Anna Marie is afraid that — that the child will be spoiled by over-indulgence, Klaus."

He shrugged his shoulder. "Well, and now?" he inquired. "Do you know, aunt, I believed nothing in this world could excite me any more; I thought I had grown into a quiet, settled man, but I've been stirred to the very depths since I have been obliged to look on quietly and see how that poor girl has been treated. Once when quite a small child I was obliged to witness two older lads torturing a poor little beetle. As I expressed my childish disapproval by biting and scratching them, they at last took refuge up in a tree, where of course, I could not follow, but the feeling of indignation aroused in my youthful breast, I have never forgotten. Many times since, I have experienced a similar feeling, when listening to those little feet pattering through the house, up and down, down and up, now in the kitchen and again in the corridor. Do you think I could help seeing how often she was tired, and how she always exerted herself to be ready at the sound of Anna Marie's

pitiless call? 'Here, Susanne, come quickly, we must go over to the dairy.' 'Susanne, where is the key of the linen closet?' I was a coward to endure it so long,—not to speak of it before it was too late. But I tell you it shall be different henceforth," he said, striking the table with his clenched fist. My strong, manly nephew was beside himself with anger and anxiety.

I ventured no reply and in a few minutes he left the room. I heard him pause to listen again at Susanne's door, then quietly pass along the hall. The tempest had arisen. Poor Anna Marie! Poor Klaus!

Toward noon my niece came to me sadder, paler than before. "She talks incessantly of Klaus," she said, slowly. "I felt it, I knew it must come, but Klaus did not understand me. Aunt, I believe the girl loves him."

So completely were my thoughts at that moment lost in Klaus, that I naturally replied, "And he is in love with her."

Anna Marie did not understand me aright. "What did you say, aunt?" she asked, every trace of fatigue fading from her eyes.

"I believe Klaus is very much in love with Susanne Mattoni," I boldly repeated.

The girl smiled involuntarily, even laughed outright, displaying to good advantage her beautiful white teeth, and then said seriously, "How can you joke about it, aunt?"

"*Mais non, mon ange*, I am not joking," I eagerly responded. I too was mistaken in Anna Marie; she



must have noticed it herself long ago, otherwise, how could she have been so prejudiced against Susanne.

“You are not joking?” she asked freezingly. “Well then you do not know my brother at all. Klaus, with his sober common sense, his quiet disposition, who any day he wished could marry the best and noblest lady in the land, he in love with this child? Well, that is preposterous, really it is ludicrous.”

“But, Anna Marie, are you so blind?” I persisted.

“No, I am not blind,” she responded, giving me a look which plainly showed how she scorned the very suggestion. “When I see those two coming out of the church as husband and wife, then I will believe that Klaus loves her, not before, and *that*, neither you nor I shall ever live to see.”

“Take care, Anna Marie. Possibly, I may be mistaken, but — God grant you may be right,” I added.

For a moment she was silent. “No,” she said to herself, raising her arm, “no, Klaus couldn't be guilty of such a thing. I believe in Klaus. He loves me with pity and compassion for the poor little creature; he is vexed with me because my views in regard to Susanne's welfare differ so widely from his, but I know he loves me dearly; I have the first place in my brother's heart, and I will willingly endure his temporary coldness; he has borne far more for my sake. When Susanne is gone, everything will go on happily as before.”

“I do not believe that Susanne will go away; that

she will be allowed to go," I answered hesitatingly, touched by the assurance with which she spoke.

Her eyes flashed. "That is my business, Aunt Rosamunde. She will go, I give you my word for that."

"But will you vex Klaus more than ever by insisting upon such a thing?"

"My brother wishes to do whatever will be for the girl's own good. He will find another home for her as soon as he realizes that his feelings towards her are not altogether those of indifference. Klaus is a true gentleman; a hint will suffice."

"*Mon dieu*, Anna Marie," I groaned, "do you intend to intimate that — that" —

"Yes," she responded.

"I beg of you, my dear girl, do not mention the subject to him, it would be like pouring oil in the fire; keep silent."

"No, aunt, I have already held my peace too long," she said, firmly, "I saw it approaching, I knew it must come, but I had not the courage to warn him and say, 'Spare the poor child the greatest sorrow a girl's heart can ever experience, the anguish of unrequited love.'"

"For heaven's sake, Anna Marie," I implored, "what reasons have you for asserting so positively that Susanne does not regard Klaus with indifference? You cannot rely absolutely upon what she says in her wild ravings when burning and tossing with fever. Sometimes she talks of Stürmer as well as Klaus. It's better to say nothing more about it. After all, it's only your

imagination, and probably Susanne herself does not know the real state of her feelings."

"Such a precocious, passionate nature as hers?" she asked, stepping to the door as if about to leave the room. "There is nothing uncertain about her, I can assure you."

"Anna Marie, wait till she has recovered; if you are too hasty you may make mistakes which can never be rectified."

She did not speak, but earnestly nodding assent left me alone with my thoughts.

Oh how I pitied my poor niece, this young girl with a woman's heart! How I was touched by her unwavering trust in her brother! I had accused her of petty jealousy, I had fancied she feared Susanne's bewitching presence might rob her of her brother's heart; nothing of all that, for I now saw she wished to guard the child's peace and happiness. Her faith, her confidence in Klaus could not be shaken, "I well know I have the first place in my brother's heart, although our views about Susanne differ so widely." Klaus was a true gentleman, he could not marry Susanne, that was out of the question! She attributed the great change in her brother, his hasty impulsiveness of the last few days, only to his real interest in and sorrow for the orphaned child, to his innate kindness and gallantry, to his just displeasure at her persistent opposition, but as soon as she explained, then —

Alas, alas! My poor old head could devise no means of escape from the trouble. What could I do? with

whom consult? Neither Klaus nor Anna Marie could now judge impartially, the only way seemed to be to appeal to Susanne's maidenly pride. But could I venture? Had I the right to concert any plot unknown to Klaus? Though my intentions were pure and good, it would still be an intrigue, and even did I do so, what assurance had I that it would not be a miserable failure? And how was I to commence?

Susanne's sickness, though severe, was short. On the following day the fever began to subside, but for almost a fortnight she lay in extreme weakness, without talking, and with seeming indifference to everything around her. Her large eyes never ceased to follow Anna Marie as she stepped noiselessly back and forth through the room. My niece's manner towards Susanne had greatly changed; she was much more tender and affectionate, and her thoughtful gentleness proved very becoming. Was it sympathy for the patient sufferer, or did she only wish to show the girl, who was so soon to be sent from the shelter of this home, that she had no personal grudge against her? I do not know; enough that she busied herself like a fond mother to do all in her power for her charge.

At length one day, Susanne raised herself up, asked to have the windows opened, and expressed a wish for something to eat. When the doctor came he found her propped up in bed, heartily enjoying a daintily cooked squab, and appeasing her sharpened appetite with broth, which she sipped with evident relish.

“Bravo!” cried the doctor merrily. “A little glass of Bordeaux wouldn’t do you any harm either.”

“And to-morrow I am going to get up,” responded Susanne.

“Oh no, not to-morrow,” he replied, “the day after, I will call again, and we will see what can be done then.”

Susanne laughed gayly at the prospect of restored health, lay back on the pillow, and, as Anna Marie left the room with the doctor, took a carnation from the bouquet which Klaus had sent her to-day, as usual, and asked, “Does Klaus, Herr von Hegewitz, ever inquire for me?” I saw the dark eyes sparkle from beneath the long lashes, and her look and tone made my heart ache, but I answered quietly, —

“Certainly, Susanne, but he is very busy now, harvesting, and he knows you are in good hands.”

She nodded. “And has Herr von Stürmer been here? Did he know I was sick?”

“Stürmer? Yes, I think he was here several times.”

“And did he never ask how I was?” she queried further.

“You are quite presumptuous, *ma mignonne*,” I said, feeling a little irritated, “he may have inquired, but really I cannot remember.”

“How ungallant!” she whispered, sulkily. At that moment the door opened and Mrs. Brockelmann entered with a basket of delicious apricots, from among which peeped here and there a half-blown rosebud.

“Baron von Stürmer’s compliments to Fräulein, and

he wishes her a speedy recovery." As she delivered this message she placed the dainty basket on the table by Susanne's bed. The expression of the old woman's eyes, and the look which she gave me, seemed to say, "Well, I cannot understand such formalities; some folks may like them, but I'm sure I do not." Susanne seized the basket with shouts of joy, and commenced drinking in the rich fragrance of the flowers. Then resting the treasure on her lap and clasping her snowy arms around it, she leaned her head on the delicate handle, closed her eyes and laughed gleefully. Just then Anna Marie entered the room, and knitting her brows at the sight of the girl's ecstasy, coolly remarked, —

"It is very friendly in Baron Stürmer, he is always thoughtful, especially when he knows any one is sick or suffering." Then ringing for a plate and fruit knife, she said, "Now, Susanne, I will peel one of these beautiful apricots for you."

## CHAPTER X.

THE next day was dark and rainy. Late in the afternoon we three were sitting in the parlor, Anna Marie with her sewing, Klaus reading the paper and smoking. Baron Stürmer came over to see Klaus on some business, and when that was transacted, the conversation turned to politics. Anna Marie took a lively part in the discussions. Klaus grew quite animated on the subject and puffed away vigorously at his pipe. Stürmer, who never indulged in tobacco in any form, playfully waved back with his silk handkerchief the wreaths of smoke, while I amused myself listening to my niece's witty, sometimes brilliant answers to Klaus's remarks.

The relationship between this brother and sister was peculiar. Anna Marie, tenderly busied in the interest of Klaus; he, mistrustful, yet at times secretly affected by the self-sacrificing care which she devoted to Susanne. He preferred avoiding his sister's society or talking directly to her.

"How is Fräulein Mattoni?" asked Stürmer, abruptly, in the midst of one of Klaus's eloquent diatribes about the recent attempt at making beet-sugar.

"Getting along nicely," replied Anna Marie, "she is reading an old family record which I came across recently, and at the same time enjoying your tempting



apricots. We are very much obliged to you, Baron Stürmer; Susanne was greatly pleased with your kind remembrance."

Then the conversation turned to the late Duke of Weimer, Charles Augustus, and from this we fell naturally into a discussion about his famous friend, Goethe, who Stürmer asserted, had wished to marry again after the death of his wife. Anna Marie refused to believe that at his advanced age the poet would think of such a thing. She was by no means one of his admirers, her simple, straightforward nature had been unpleasantly affected by Werther, such passionate feelings were unappreciated by her. Goethe's numerous love affairs prevented him from occupying the lofty place he might otherwise have held in her estimation; indeed, they lowered him to the rank of ordinary mortals. That genius should be allowed to move in different orbits, that a master intellect like his should not be judged by ordinary laws, did not enter her mind and she shook her head disapprovingly.

"An idle story!" I cried, laughingly.

"By no means," replied Stürmer. "Herr von N—— is my authority, he is thoroughly posted in regard to the matter; you may rest assured it is true."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Klaus, "it is said he has grown to be a regular old icicle, one scarcely dares to approach him."

"A man who has created a Gretchen grown to be like an icicle! Never!" cried Stürmer.

"Let alone a Werther!" I jocosely supplemented.

“Werther is unendurable,” chimed in Anna Marie, “bombastic, overdrawn. A person who acts like Werther is, in my opinion, unworthy the name of man.”

Stürmer’s dark eyes gazed fixedly at my niece. “Your judgment, Fräulein von Hegewitz, is vastly different from that of the majority of women, who maintain that an unrequited love robs life of all real worth, and why should this not hold good also in the case of a man? I acknowledge there are thousands of ways offered, through his business and the many claims the world makes on his time, to cause him to forget such a grief more quickly, but it demands a very sober view of life to look at the matter purely objectively, and I really think those who pronounce such a judgment have never experienced what it is to love.”

At these last words, Anna Marie’s face rivalled in whiteness the linen on which she was sewing. She lowered her head as one conscience-stricken, and her trembling hand refused to guide the needle aright. A painful pause ensued. Klaus cast a sympathetic glance at Stürmer, it was the first time the latter had, in her or our hearing, given any expression to the bitterness of his disappointment.

“Mercy, what a storm!” I said, as a flood of water was dashed against the window; anything, even a remark about the weather, was better than this embarrassing silence.

“It is very severe,” replied Baron Stürmer, rising, “in fact, I must make haste, or it will be dark before I reach

home." From the hurried manner in which he bade us adieu, we inferred that he wished to be alone with his sorrow.

"Good-by, dear Edwin," I said softly, pressing his hand in mine, and neither brother nor sister extended the usual invitation to stay and spend the evening. Anna Marie had risen and laid her hand on Klaus's shoulder. She was still very pale, and the firmness with which she said good night was evidently assumed, for as soon as the gentlemen left the room she rose, impatiently opened the door, and stood there as if defying the storm, while the raindrops beat against her face and rested like pearls on the heavy braids of her fair hair. Once or twice I fancied I saw the heaving of her breast as she tried to repress a sob, but I might have been mistaken, for as Klaus stepped into the room she turned back, and with an almost sublime expression, approached him and clasped his arm.

"Dear brother," I heard her say, with a sad tremor in her voice, leaning her head against his breast, "dear Klaus." "Anna Marie?" he asked, seizing her hand.

"Klaus, let bygones be bygones. Forgive me for opposing you so persistently, it was very ugly in me."

"No, no, my dear girl, I too was more hasty than I should have been," he responded heartily, drawing his sister closer to him, "we were both wrong."

"Yes, Klaus, I was not candid with you, I should have spoken to you at once, but I was not absolutely certain myself, and I did not want to worry you."

“Worry me? with what?” asked Klaus quickly.

Anna Marie hesitated and clasped her brother’s arm more tightly. From my window corner I uttered a faint sound of warning, to which Anna Marie paid no attention. Rash and decided in all she did, she could not refrain from embracing the opportunity which now offered, and, as Alexander of old with one bold stroke severed the Gordian knot, so she, with impulsive decision, introduced the dreaded theme.

“With the fact that it is now questionable whether Susanne should be allowed to remain longer in our house,” she said, softly but decidedly.

“The old story, Anna Marie,” he said, “having failed to gain your end by violence, you hope to catch me in this way.”

“Far from it, Klaus, you do me an injustice,” she answered. “Something vastly different impelled me to come to you now. I did not intend to mention Susanne, all I longed for at present was to have you treat me as formerly, to hear a kind, loving word from your lips. I only broached the subject as it came in the natural course of our conversation. Forgive me, Klaus.”

“You have judged Susanne harshly, Anna Marie,” he began after a pause. “I know you have sacrificed your feelings and nursed her faithfully, but yet your sentiments in regard to her are unaltered. Now when she is sick and may never fully regain her strength” —

“I have expected too much from one of such delicate constitution, Klaus, and I have prayed day and night

that God would restore her health. I have had the girl's best interests at heart, believe me brother, though I have seen no reason to alter my opinion of her character."

The brother and sister stood no longer side by side but facing each other. "Underneath all her frivolity and thoughtlessness, however, which I so despise, beats a warm, loving heart; Klaus, Susanne is no longer the child you imagine, she has — Susanne loves you, Klaus."

The shades of evening were fast gathering upon us. I could no longer distinguish the face of my nephew, although his quick, heavy breathing still fell upon my ear. He made no reply but stood motionless. Foolish child, I thought, as I cast a glance at Anna Marie.

"You do not believe me, Klaus," she continued, as he still remained silent, "yet it is true. I am not deceiving myself. As Susanne lay burning and tossing in fever, she talked of you incessantly; yes, I have had many proofs of it. Such a love grows daily, hourly; and now I ask, would it be right to allow it to destroy her happiness? Perhaps she herself is not yet fully aware of the state of her affections, but if she remains here the awakening must soon come."

Again no answer. Looking blankly before him, Klaus seated himself in the nearest chair. Without, sounded the ringing of the bell for the domestics; the rain was again beating and dashing upon the sandstone of the portico, while the pale, dim lights within, gave a weird appearance to everything in the room. I fancied I saw gaunt, spectral-like figures rising from every nook and

corner, and even the gayly flowered portière moved lightly to and fro, as if some one stood behind to listen.

“You are right,” said Klaus at last. “The wife of a Hegewitz, — impossible! Isn’t that what you mean, Anna Marie?”

“Yes,” was her simple response.

“Yes,” he repeated, springing up, and with long strides measuring the room.

“And what disposal of the girl do you wish to point out?” he asked, pausing before his sister.

“Not point out, Klaus, that sounds so different from what I intended,” she replied. “Place her in a boarding-school in some southern climate, say in Switzerland; that will give her an opportunity to grow well and strong.”

“It sounds reasonable and well considered,” he returned bitterly, “but for the present Susanne has not fully recovered.” Then after a pause he added, “Tomorrow morning I shall leave for O — in Silesia. Important business calls me there; I have already delayed going too long. That meets with your approval, does it not?”

Anna Marie started. For O — ?” she asked

“Yes,” he repeated with glowing cheeks, “I have been indulging in too long a holiday; things are in a bad condition there; there is to be a meeting of all the creditors. Herr Platzen has written me repeatedly, urging me to come and see to things myself. You know my mortgage is the largest but” —

“And yet you have not gone, Klaus?” she said reproachfully. “Why?”

“I shall start early to-morrow morning,” he interrupted shortly.

Evidently she had not understood aright, but stepping up and laying her hand on his shoulder, she said.

“Do not let any unpleasantness arise between us again, Klaus. Certainly, you would not wish me to act against my convictions.”

“No, no,” he responded, “I am much obliged to you.” But instead of drawing her closer to him, as was his wont, he freed himself from her arms and left the room. For a moment she stood gazing anxiously after him; then energetically shaking her head, as if to drive away the thoughts trying to force themselves upon her, seized her basket of keys and stepped out.

Half an hour later found us assembled around the supper table. Anna Marie had gone to her brother's room and brought him downstairs. He appeared nervous and excited, let his soup stand till it became cold, and absent-mindedly crumbled the bread between his fingers.

“Were you with Susanne, Anna Marie?” I asked.

“I was in a hurry, but knocked at her door and asked what she would like for supper; as I received no answer, I supposed she was sleeping, and did not go in.”

“What excuse are you going to offer for sending her away from here?” I continued.

“Her health is a sufficiently valid reason,” responded



my niece. I made no reply ; the meal was finished in silence, and silent we still remained when later we gathered round the table in the sitting-room, little dreaming what had occurred in the meantime. Absorbed in thought we paid no heed to the rain which still pattered monotonously on the roofs, and rushed in torrents from the gutters. The storm came from over the Haide, the wind howled incessantly and dashed the falling drops in blinding sprays against the window.

In the midst of our reflections, Mrs. Brockelmann stepped suddenly into the room, her eyes peered wildly round and with a voice full of astonishment, she asked abruptly, "Isn't Mamselle Susanne here?"

"Susanne!" we cried in one breath, Klaus springing to his feet.

"She is not in her room. Gracious heavens, where can she be? She got up before supper and, after a great deal of giggling and laughing, dressed herself, saying she wished to come down and surprise you all; I scolded her but it was no use. She must be hiding somewhere." So great was the old woman's anxiety, she could scarcely finish the sentence. Anna Marie had hurried from the room, and her quick nervous step sounded along the corridor. Mrs. Brockelmann took a light from the table and commenced searching in the parlor, while Klaus, deathly pale, stood as if rooted to the spot.

"She must be there," I said.

He heard not a word. His whole attention was centred on Anna Marie, who had just returned, and with

an expression of terror in her wide-opened eyes, was gazing intently into his earnest face.

"She has gone, Klaus," she said, tremblingly, "I know not where, nor why."

Without a word he stepped past her.

"Klaus," she called after him, "take me with you," but there came no reply. "She has heard, oh, she has heard what I said to him," moaned Anna Marie. "Aunt, I beg of you go with him, do not let him go alone," and hurrying out she came back with blankets and covers. I heard the hurried preparations for harnessing, but how I got into the carriage where Klaus was already seated, I never understood.

It was a half-covered buggy which rolled away with us down the dark road; the rain fell drearily upon its leathern top, and the wind, rising higher and higher, beat against us in all its fury. By the light of our lantern I saw the cape of Klaus's cloak fluttering and blowing in every direction, and the reflection of our carriage light shining in the puddles that covered the road. Klaus drove heedlessly, and even to-day I can scarcely realize how, in the darkness of that night, we ever reached the abode of the Dambitz blacksmith. The little house lay shrouded in darkness as Klaus rapped loudly with his whip against the door, the watchdog set up a warning bark and a man's voice forthwith asked our errand, inquiring at the same time if anything had gone wrong with the carriage, in a way which led us to infer that it was probably not the first time he had been

aroused from his slumbers on account of some such accident.

“Is your tenant at home?” was Klaus’s only reply to his queries.

“She has been here since noon, gnädiger Herr,” he politely responded, recognizing the familiar Hegewitz voice. It was well known throughout the village that the foster-child of the old actress was making her home in Bütze.

“Is she alone?”

“Oh, you have come to see about the young lady,” he called. “She came here more than an hour ago, dripping wet, and is now upstairs asleep. I will open the door right away.”

Klaus assisted me to alight. “Would you like to go up and see her?” he asked, pressing my hand so tightly that I could scarcely suppress a scream.

“Certainly, my boy,” I hastened to reply, “we must get the little truant back to Bütze as soon as possible.”

But it was not so soon as we had anticipated. From a low, whitewashed back room, accessible only by a flight of creaking steps, which (notwithstanding the blacksmith’s wife preceded me to light the way) were so dark and steep I could scarcely climb them, Isabella Pfannenschmidt, glaring like an enraged lioness, came to meet me. With outstretched arms she placed herself directly before the bed, which stood in a deep recess and was half covered with a profusion of yellow chintz drapery, and with theatrical pathos called to me, “What

do you want? You have no right to this child any longer."

I deigned no reply, but pushing her to one side, looked into the bed and from under a confused heap of blue and red checked quilts, spied Susanne's bright eyes. Without looking at me, she turned towards the wall and remained motionless.

"Susanne, was that right?" I asked.

No answer.

"Why did you run away, my child? Don't you know you might have made yourself sick and miserable for the rest of your life by such reckless folly?"

Still no answer, save quick, loud breathing. "You are a naughty, perverse child," I continued. "You injure yourself unspeakably, and give a great deal of trouble to those who love you dearly."

An indescribable smile played around the mouth of the old woman, as with folded arms she stood listening.

"Are you well enough to get up and come home with me, Susanne?" I asked.

"Never," cried Isabella, "what should she go back to you for? You had intended to send her away, sooner or later."

"Susanne, Klaus is downstairs, he has been very anxious about you, and Anna Marie is waiting impatiently for you to come home. Be reasonable, be a good girl. You owe us an explanation of this conduct."

But instead of a reply she commenced to cough distressingly, then turning suddenly, threw up her hands

while those bright eyes peered vacantly at me. With an agonizing cry the old woman fell on the bed, threw her arms around Susanne, and called, "O God, she is dying!"

Had Klaus heard the cry? I cannot say. I only know that he instantly appeared in the room, pushed the old woman from the bed, and that that moment decided the destiny of two beings. All the tender emotions of his nature, which, after desperate struggling and striving, he had with the assistance of cold reason so long succeeded in suppressing, broke loose from their fetters at the sight of the little unconscious sufferer. Nothing could now restrain him, passionately throwing his arms around her, he kissed her thin white hands and her dark hair, and called her his beloved, his bride, his wife, who would never again dare to leave him, who was dearer to him than everything else in the world. In amazement and alarm, I listened to these rash, impetuous words, and thanked God that Isabella Pfannenschmidt had left the room, having probably gone for tea, water, or some other restorative.

Shaking his shoulder with a firm hand, I asked, "Are you crazy Klaus? Do you not see that she has never before been as ill as she is now."

Susanne had fainted away in his arms; her head rested on his shoulder, and her pale face wore a happy, smiling expression, like that of a sleeping child.

"Aunt," said the tall blonde man, his fine, blue eyes moist with tears, "aunt, she must not, dare not die, for

as long as I lived, I could never cease to reproach myself." Once more he pressed his lips to her forehead, then, without looking round, left the room.

At last, after much exertion on our part, Susanne was restored to consciousness, and wearily opened her eyes. No sign or look betrayed whether or not she had heard Klaus's wild outpouring of his love, but she meekly allowed us to change her wet clothes, unhesitatingly agreed to accompany me to Bütze, and chided Isabella severely for her noisy lamentations. Wrapped in warm blankets, I led her from that little room; for a moment she wavered, as by the light of the oil lamp she espied Klaus on the stairs, but he lifted her in his strong arms, and the smoking, unsteady light, almost extinguished by the breeze showed me how tenderly he carried his burden down the stairs, her slender arms clasped tightly and securely round his neck. With tottering knees, I followed them. Yes, we were taking Susanne back to Bütze, to stay!

But what a ride home! Never before had it seemed like such an endless journey. In silence, I sat beside Susanne, struggling to subdue my ancestral pride, which rose in arms at the thought of my nephew debasing his noble lineage by a marriage with this low-born girl. I was angry with Susanne for being so beloved by Klaus, and if ever in my life I hated her, it was that night in the dark carriage. Soon, I felt something softly touch my clothing, as it slipped past me to the floor; then some one clasped my knees, and at that moment Su-



sanne's head lay on my lap. "I wanted to go, Fräulein Rosamond," she whispered, "why did you come and take me back?"

Only a few simple words, but so full of persuasive truth that my anger immediately vanished; a deep sympathy filled my heart, and tears coursed from my eyes.

What avails the most substantial barrier of human laws and regulations, unshaken though it may have been for hundred of years, against the storm of a passionate love? One short moment and the proud structure lies in ruins, while over all scruples and considerations waves triumphantly the purple banner of love.

She kissed my fingers, and I felt that her lips were scorching hot. I did not withdraw my hand, neither did I return her gentle clasp, nor give any sign that I understood her meaning. Before my mind rose ever the image of Anna Marie. Oh, Anna Marie, I could not prevent it, it was not my fault that it came!

At last the carriage rolled through the gate, and rattled over the drive to the front of the house. As my nephew rose from his seat, I saw my niece standing in the arched doorway, Klaus opened the carriage door, Susanne raised herself, and he, picking her up as he would a child, carried her up the broad stone steps, past Anna Marie, into the house. They had forgotten me; so, with the assistance of Mrs. Brockelmann, I crawled out as best I could, and made my way to the sitting-room; there I found the two girls alone, Susanne, with



feverish, glowing cheeks, in Klaus's easy chair, Anna Marie with a cup of hot tea standing before her.

No question, no reproach escaped her lips; quietly she offered the warm drink, which was, however, declined. "You must go to bed, Susanne;" the child rose, took a few steps, but tottered, and supported herself on her chair. "Put your arms around my neck," said Anna Marie, at the same time lifting her in her strong arms, and stepping out of the door as if her burden was light as a feather. Mrs. Brockelmann followed, and I overheard her muttering, "I suppose we haven't had enough yet."

Exhausted, I sat in my chair—what was to come next? God grant that Anna Marie and Klaus may not see each other again to-night.

Half an hour passed, then I heard my niece's step, and through the still open door, in the soft glimmer of the hall light, saw plainly her tall figure drawing nearer. She paused to knock at her brother's door, I leaned forward to listen, all was silent. "Klaus," she cried. No answer. I fancied I heard her half-suppressed sob. "Klaus," she called again, imploringly, and pressed her hand on the latch. She waited a few minutes, then turned and went upstairs.

"He is angry with her," I murmured, in a half-audible tone, "and she longs for him to be friendly again. May God bring good out of it, and order all things for the best." Extinguishing the light in the sitting-room, I went over to listen at my nephew's door. I heard his

even, heavy tread, proving that he was there. "Klaus," I called, so loud that I was frightened at my own voice; instantly he started towards me; the key turned, and opening the door, he said, —

"Come in, aunt." I was struck with his frightened, careworn appearance, as he seized my hand, saying: "It's a good thing that you have come to look after me, so much has happened of late. I know not how" —

"And now, Klaus?" I asked, allowing him to lead me to the sofa, a much-prized, familiar heirloom that, as long as I can remember, has stood in the same spot, under a collection of some fifty or more antlers, which since their capture in the Bütze forests have adorned the Bütze walls.

"And now?" he repeated, drawing his hand over his brow. "It is a strange problem through and through, but Susanne is to be my wife; more I cannot say."

It was out at last. Long ago I realized that it must come, and yet it came like a death blow.

"Klaus," I commenced, but impatiently and angrily he interrupted me.

"I know it all, everything you are going to say. I have weighed it all over myself hundreds of times. I am just as well aware as you that Susanne is a burgher's daughter, and that the question of her mother's ancestry is involved in mystery. I know that I am old in comparison with her, that she is a trifling, spoiled child, quite unsuited, the world would say, to my earnest, sedate disposition; and, above all things, I fully un-

derstand that Anna Marie will never make allowances and receive her as a sister, and yet, aunt, my decision is unalterable; I love Susanne Mattoni, with all her childish follies, scarcely deserving the name of faults. I love her in her charming, innocent girlhood; it will make me happy to be able to train and help her, and as Anna Marie has refused to give her any love, I will bestow upon her a double share."

I was speechless for there was nothing to be said.

"You do not seem very joyful about it, aunt," he continued, bitterly. "Just think, only this afternoon I contemplated flight, I felt almost crushed. In the midst however, of all the happiness opened up to me by my sister's words, 'Susanne loves you,' there arose many formidable prejudices, which hitherto I deemed sacred and unassailable. But when I saw Susanne almost dying in that miserable little room, everything became clear to me at once; I realized that all this world gives is naught in comparison with a pure, strong love, and then" —

"And Anna Marie, Klaus?"

"I can say nothing more to her this evening," he replied, "wait till I am more composed, there is plenty of time. It enrages me when I think that it was her words which drove Susanne out in such a night. God grant it may do her no permanent injury."

"Klaus," I implored, with tearful eyes, "do not forget that Anna Marie tried to do what was best for Susanne; think how she loves you, how from her earliest child-

hood she has been completely wrapped up in you and your interests ; I sincerely hope, Klaus, that your marriage will prove a wise and happy one, but do not expect that your sister can, without a struggle, consent to your taking a step which may perhaps cause you much sorrow and bring little lasting happiness."

He made no response, but stood before his secretary gazing at a portrait of Anna Marie, her Christmas gift to him three years ago. It had been painted shortly after her refusal of Stürmer. Those limpid blue eyes looked down upon him from that proud earnest countenance, around whose mouth lay a peculiarly sad expression for such a girlish face, as if they would again repeat the words then spoken, "I will stay with you Klaus, I cannot leave you."

"I will do nothing rashly, aunt," he resumed, after a long pause. "I am no reckless boy wishing to take the fortress by storm, moreover, Susanne needs rest, she is not in a condition to stand any excitement at present. Rest assured I love my sister dearly, but I am unable to throw away a second time, on her account, such a happiness ; then she was a child, as such I owed her a duty, now she is a woman who, sooner or later, will marry and grace a home of her own."

"No, no, Klaus, you are mistaken."

"Well, perhaps not, I admit she is differently constituted from the majority of persons, but in any case she is well calculated to bear her griefs alone ; she shall always be cherished in my heart and home as my only,

my much-beloved sister, and shall ever occupy the first place after — Susanne. With that she must be satisfied, and I shall expect from her, love and consideration for the one I have chosen to be my wife. But, as I have said, it is impossible for me at present to discuss the matter quietly with her. As already arranged, I shall start at once on my journey. I shall remain three weeks, perhaps longer; meanwhile, we shall all be able to grow more composed and consider the matter more calmly, myself as well as the rest, dear Aunt Rosamunde. I have been thinking of writing dispassionately to my sister about all that has happened; indeed I am convinced that after all that will be the best plan."

"When shall you start, Klaus?"

"Frederick is packing my trunk now, the overseer is coming early, not later than four o'clock this morning, to consult with me about business, and at five o'clock the carriage is to be at the door."

"Does Anna Marie know?"

"No, I would like to leave without any farewells."

"You are angry with her, Klaus, it is not right," I sobbed.

"Time will soothe it all. I do not want the breach to grow wider. You know her, and you know me, all our explanations of late have only made matters worse, and generally left a sting in my heart. No, I do not wish to be harsh with her again."

"And Susanne?"

"Susanne knows enough," he replied, "please tell her

for me that I was obliged to take this trip, and that I hope on my return to find her well and strong."

"Will she not misinterpret it, after all you said to her last evening?"

The blood rushed to his cheeks.

"No," he answered, "it would be compromising myself to give her any further assurance. Susanne knows that I love her and I think she returns my love; more is unnecessary."

Honest old Klaus! Still I see you standing before me in the flush of an excitement, through which your manly noble character shone clearly and distinctly forth.

"Farewell, Klaus," I said, laying my hand in his; he raised it to his lips, and looked in my tearful eyes. "Take good care of my little Susanne," he tenderly entreated, "I shall never cease to thank you for any kind word you may speak to her. If she is in trouble of any kind, if she gets sick again, send me word immediately. I will leave a few lines for Anna Marie."

"Good-by, Klaus, may God go with you and grant a happy ending to all our doubts and sorrows."

He accompanied me along the dark corridor to the staircase. A momentary warning and the old family timepiece sounded out two doleful strains. Two o'clock already! Again I waved farewell and started for my room, with what a heavy heart God only knows.

Pausing before Susanne's door, I noiselessly raised the latch, and by the faint glimmer of the night-lamp discerned Anna Marie sitting in the armchair by the



bedside; her fair head rested on the green pillow of the high-backed chair, her folded hands clasped her New Testament, while she, wearied and exhausted, slept a sound, peaceful sleep. Softly I approached and gazed upon Susanne who, perceiving me, lowered her long curling lashes and feigned sleep; as I stepped back, however, she raised them again and glanced slyly round. Was it any wonder that sleep had forsaken her and that her cheeks were all aglow?

Confusing, anxious dreams disturbed my own slumbers that night, and towards morning I was suddenly startled by what I fancied was the dull rolling of carriage wheels. "Klaus," I thought, and a strange uneasiness crept over me. I rose and stepped to the window, a heavy white mist enveloped the trees and overspread the roofs of the barns, everywhere a profound stillness prevailed; the door of the carriage house stood open and the hostler stepped slowly into the stall, but the road gate was already wide open, and I could catch a glimpse of the lonely poplar-lined village street.

I wearily retraced my steps and lay down to rest. Why should I feel anxious? So far all was in quietness and order. Again I slept, but on opening my eyes I found Mrs. Brockelmann waiting by my bedside.

"Gnädiges Fräulein," she said, in an uncertain tone, "Mr. Klaus went early this morning, away to O——"

"He will be back before long, Mrs. Brockelmann," I comforted her. "Does Anna Marie know?"



“Indeed she does,” was the quick response, “and I assure you she was not a little frightened when Frederick handed her Mr. Klaus’s letter. But you know, gnädiges Fräulein, she never finds fault with anything her brother does; she thinks he could do nothing wrong.” With these words she left the room.

I then seated myself at the window, where I remained several hours, meditating upon our recent strange experiences. Klaus had gone, and on his return he intended to marry Susanne; this fact remained ever the source of my greatest discomfort.

When I went downstairs, I found Anna Marie busied with the overseers and the forester; how clearly she gave her directions! The men had not a word to say. Some offers had been received for the grain; never before had the harvest been so bountiful and the prices so low. Anna Marie did not wish to conclude a bargain rashly. In eastern Prussia the wheat crops had been a failure “Wait till we hear about the potatoes,” I overheard her say, “if they are as poor as we anticipate, we shall need more bread, our people must not suffer.”

Quietly and cautiously she transacted all the business; undoubtedly Klaus was right, the housekeeping was in competent hands.

As she passed into the parlor she pressed my hand confidingly in hers and said: “Klaus’s departure seems almost like flight, but I am sure all will turn out for the best.”

She made no allusion to the events of yesterday, and

during the whole of Klaus's absence never referred to them; Susanne maintained a similar silence. When I stepped to her bedside and informed her of my nephew's absence, the color came and went in her cheeks, but not a word escaped her lips.

For a short time she was obliged to remain in bed, but before long her little feet tripped merrily through the rooms and her fairy form again reclined in the spacious easy-chair; once more she wandered through the woods, caught the feathery down flying in the air, and enjoyed the juicy pears, while the increasing bloom in her cheeks gave evidence of restored health.

Apparently, she missed Klaus; the most convincing proof of this was in her dress, which at times was shamefully careless. Once when I administered a gentle reprimand I could almost hear the words which seemed to hover on her lips, "Dress! for whom?" but she merely blushed and turned away without speaking. Isabella Pfannenschmidt came a few day after Klaus's departure, while Susanne was still confined to bed. Stepping into the room shortly after her arrival, I found her beside Susanne's couch; her face wore an annoyed expression and I was just in time to catch the words, "Well now, that's always the way, the little chicks think they are wiser than their mothers."

She was embarrassed by my presence, and as usual remained disagreeable and sulky. I purposely avoided leaving them alone, and toward evening she bade Susanne a gushing good-by, courtesied coolly to me,

excused herself and departed. Before starting, however, she turned and whispered in the child's ear, "All will come right, my sugarplum ; only be patient."

Life passed on in the same dull, uneventful way as usual in our now masterless home. From early dawn till set of sun, Anna Marie busied herself with domestic cares and the additional duties which now devolved upon her ; there seemed to be no limit to her powers of endurance. "It's the easiest way to keep from being lonely," she playfully replied, when I advised her to take a little rest. "I miss Klaus more than I can tell you, Aunt Rosamunde." Occasionally, Stürmer came over to inquire for the ladies. On one of his equestrian jaunts, he met Anna Marie who was also on horseback ; he had probably overtaken her on the village road as she was returning from the fields, for I noticed the overseer rode behind them. Susanne and I were standing at the window. "What a handsome couple," I involuntarily exclaimed, and truly I thought I had never before seen my niece so beautiful.

Klaus wrote seldom ; times have changed since those days ; then we were satisfied if we received a letter every two weeks. Anna Marie answered promptly, and her reports must have been very full and satisfactory, for I received no letter, no inquiry, concerning our secret. With the exception of business communications my niece generally read me, shortly after our evening meal, all the letters she received from her brother ; undemonstrative and cold though they were, a

tone of homesickness pervaded them all. Her face fairly beamed at every word of praise he bestowed upon his old Märkish homestead, as he contrasted it with the more highly-favored Silesia; indeed, such praise stirred her heart to its very depths. Somewhat akin to the tender love she bore her brother was the deep-rooted affection she cherished for her old home! no mountain lake could compare with the oak-framed pond of their own garden, no stately mountain possessed for her a charm equal to that of the purple heaths of Bütze, or the pine forests of the heart of Prussia.

And the object which above all others intensified this longing for home, which rendered the old manor house in the eyes of its far-off proprietor as a fairy castle or a trysting place of the elves, *this object* sat all unmoved during the reading of his letters, playing with her kitten and even occasionally indulging in a yawn.

“Is this indifference assumed,” I asked myself; sometimes I thought so, especially when, as we talked of Klaus, I noticed her sad, wistful smile. On such occasions I fancied she was grieving over the long postponed continuation of that warm outpouring of his love; she, whose passionate nature tortured itself with doubts, and yet I dared speak no word of assuring comfort, Klaus did not wish it. Moreover, why should Susanne be spared the blissful suspense and tender longing of life’s first love?

One morning a peasant lad came running up the yard with a note for Susanne, which he said the old Mamselle

in the blacksmith's had sent. I met him on the steps just as I was leaving the garden, and called Mrs. Brockelmann to deliver the letter. The boy trotted away and I went to see my niece in the library. Very soon Susanne's airy footsteps sounded along the hall, and the next moment she stepped quickly into the room, and breathlessly exclaimed, —

“Please let me have a carriage, Fräulein Anna Marie, dear old Isa is ill and I must go to her.”

Disturbed by the interruption, my niece unwillingly laid down the pen with which she had been figuring her accounts. “But, Susanne, how often have I asked you not to run in that way; you are all out of breath again.”

“We must first ascertain what is the matter with Isa,” I suggested, for my nephew's entreating words, “Take good care of my little Susanne,” rushed into my mind. He had asked it as a personal favor. He was no child, but a staid man with a strong will; he intended to make Susanne his wife, and I knew he would bitterly reproach me if anything happened to a hair of her head.

“It may be some contagious disease, Susanne,” I continued, with all the firmness at my disposal, as she glared at me with flashing eyes for venturing to oppose her.

“And supposing it is,” she called, clenching her little fists and impatiently stamping her foot.

Anna Marie rose. “Are you not ashamed, Susanne? It is right that you should feel anxious about Isa and wish to nurse her, it would be unnatural for you to do

otherwise; but remember you have not yet fully recovered from your own illness, and the atmosphere of that small, close sick room would be poisonous to you; moreover, Aunt Rosamunde is right, we must first learn the nature of her disease; it may be something infectious."

"And in the meanwhile she may die and be buried," cried Susanne, passionately. "Even if it is contagious, it makes no difference. I must go to her." And bursting into tears she threw herself in a chair and buried her face in the cushion. My niece approached and bent over her.

"Susanne," she continued, in a friendly voice, "we will send an experienced woman to see Isa. Now try to compose yourself; there is something about which I want to talk to you, as soon as I come back."

God only knows what is coming next, I thought, as I noticed the weeping child. What has she to say to her alone now? Softly I stroked Susanne's hair. "Do not cry, *ma petite*," I said, soothingly, "all is in the hands of our Heavenly Father, who guides and governs, according to his own unerring wisdom, the life of all his creatures; only trust Him, he will do whatever is best." I do not know if Susanne grasped the meaning of my words; her only response was another paroxysm of weeping and renewed sobbing; she refused to be comforted.

In a short time my niece returned and seated herself opposite Susanne. "Will you be reasonable for once and listen to me?" she asked in a somewhat rigid tone.



Susanne started and with a defiant look, replied, "I am listening."

At this juncture a visitor was announced, the pastor's sister, one of my girlhood's friends, so I was obliged to leave, but I did so with some misgivings as I watched the two girls; what in the world had my niece to say privately to Susanne? After a chat of two inexpressibly long hours, Mamselle Grüne made her adieux; she found me more absent-minded than is ever permissible in polite society; even the conversation about the wedding of one of our early mutual friends which had been instrumental in almost bringing about another marriage, that of Minna Grüne herself, and which had terminated in a general conflagration, failed to interest me as formerly. When I came downstairs my niece was again busy at her accounts and Susanne had disappeared.

"Anna Marie," I asked more hastily than usual, "what did you say to Susanne?"

"I wanted to talk to her about her future," she responded, "but" —

"About her future?" I repeated, softly.

"Certainly, aunt, for Susanne is troubled with a terrible disease, she is suffering from *ennui*. In my opinion, this idle, aimless life would enervate and sicken the strongest constitution."

"What did she say, Anna Marie?"

"She? She ran away at the very sound of the word future. She is a naughty child, and it is high time for my brother to come back and send her away to



school; since his departure she oversteps all reasonable bounds."

Though I could not refrain from smiling, my eyes filled with tears, and yielding to an involuntary emotion I asked, "Anna Marie, do you really believe that Klaus will send her away?"

Turning around she looked at me in terrified amazement. "Can you doubt it, aunt? He went away to make arrangements for that very purpose. Don't you suppose that the lawyer could easily have transacted all the business in Silesia?"

The next day Susanne, pale and despondent, with every nerve strained to the highest tension, went to Dambitz to take care of Isa. She had cried all night long, refused to rise in the morning, and wept till Anna Marie ordered the carriage.

We had heard that Isa was suffering from a severe attack of lumbago, and there was no fear of any infectious disease. The child packed her things as if preparing for a sojourn at some fashionable watering-place, but Anna Marie, without note or comment, took from her trunk the flowers, ribbons, laces, and white dresses, and substituted a half dozen strong, substantial aprons.

"You will have far more use for these, Susanne," was her quiet explanation. I was thoroughly opposed to this journey, and felt sure that Klaus would not approve of it, but my niece thought it the best thing to be done.

"You know I cannot endure the old woman," she said, "but when she is ill and wishes Susanne, of course I must not prevent the child from going to her."

So Susanne had her own way and drove to Dambitz. How could any man fall in love with such a weak, childish creature I wondered, as with a smile of satisfaction she leaned back in the carriage; the black crape veil waved around her pretty face, her little feet were propped against the seat, and she gracefully waved me a last good-by. Oh, mademoiselle has the airs and graces of a duchess; mademoiselle will be all right when she is the lady of Hegewitz. Alas, alas, if Anna Marie had a presentiment of this!

Evening brought a letter from Klaus. As usual on the arrival of such epistles, my heart commenced to beat violently, for each time I thought he would write his sister of his love. Carefully observing my niece while she read, I noticed her knitting her fair white brow and shaking her head.

“Klaus has been obliged to buy the farm in order to save the rest,” she then remarked, “he writes he had expected to return in eight or ten days, but unfortunately finds it necessary to remain longer. ‘The harvest home shall be celebrated just as if I was present,’” she read. “‘You may say a few words to the people in my place. You can easily imagine that my hands are full and I am considerably annoyed to find we are in the middle of harvest and nothing in readiness. The place is settled by a loafing Polish element. I found the overseer was a rogue and sent him away immediately after my arrival. The surroundings of the manor, as well as the building itself and the large, well-shaded garden, are beautiful,

and yet I should be very glad to dispose of the whole thing. The lofty mountains so close at hand oppress me, they circumscribe my view; you know the magnificent outlook to which I have been accustomed from my own window, the vista that stretches before me as I look through the opening between the two barns away beyond the garden wall. As soon as I can settle affairs here I shall send for Beling, the overseer at Bütze, and leave him to superintend in my place. I hope you are all well. Why doesn't Aunt Rosamunde write? Is Susanne well — entirely recovered? You did not mention her in your last letter.'"

Oh, I thought, as my niece let the letter fall into her lap, oh what homesickness! You foolish Klaus! And suppose I should write him, "Susanne is in Dambitz," what would he say?

"I should like to drive over to Dambitz, to-morrow to see how Susanne is getting along," I said, turning to Anna Marie, who had again taken up her work, — a gay embroidered rug for her brother.

"I am willing to wager, aunt, that she will be here again to-morrow; do you think she could be contented in such a box of a room, with no bed but that hard, uncomfortable sofa? You will see if she is not back before we know it."

The next day, Anna Marie sat with her rug by my bedside; my arms and shoulders were wrapped in cat's fur, to relieve the sharp pains of my rheumatism. Such an attack frequently compelled me to remain in bed

eight or ten days ; this time, I lay there feeling particularly uncomfortable, and uncommonly like a poor, miserable sinner. Susanne was constantly in my thoughts, and my painful reflections about her completely unstrung my nerves, which Anna Marie's quiet composure failed to calm. My eyes followed her large, faultlessly formed hands, as the clover leaf grew beneath her skilful fingers. The lions supporting the crest were already finished, and the last petal would be completed to-day. "Fear God, destroy thy foe, trust no friend," was the curious motto on our escutcheon. It probably originated in the days when the different clans lived in a perpetual state of warfare with each other, when each in his own or his father's house, stood in constant readiness for the fray.

"Anna Marie," I began at last.

Rousing herself from her reverie, she asked, "Shall I read the paper to you ?"

"Thank you, *mon ange*, but tell me do you know whether Susanne — is she — ?"

"She is still with Isa, dear aunt," she responded ; "early this morning I sent her a little basket of eatables, Marieken took it over, and" —

"Well, how did she find her ?"

"She told me she found Susanne sitting by the old woman's bedside, and laces, ribbons, and flowers lying in confusion all around her ; she was trimming some new hats for herself. Marieken said she was so absorbed in her fineries that she had no eyes for my dainties."

"Incorrigible," I muttered. "Anna Marie, why did you allow her to go? Is the old woman really very ill?" I added, a little out of tune.

"No; as Marieken represents it, her illness doesn't appear very severe. If you were not an invalid yourself, aunt, I should have driven over to Dambitz, and seen for myself."

With a sigh I leaned back on my pillow. Of course, I must get sick just at this time. The wind blew fresh and cool over the bare fields; we were going to have an early fall. My good times were surely over for the present, and before me loomed up the days when I must sit by the fire in my own chamber, the days for cat's fur and hop pillows.

"I do not intend to invite any one to our harvest home, this year," commenced Anna Marie, after a pause; "what would all those people do without Klaus? It would afford me no pleasure, if he were not here; on the contrary, it would only make me sad."

"But Klaus wished it."

"Yes, aunt, but that will be all right; I know him," she replied, with a smile.

At this moment, Mrs. Brockelmann announced Baron Stürmer. Instantly my niece's cheeks grew scarlet, the needle trembled in her fingers, and in an unsteady voice, she said, —

"Excuse me to the baron. I am sorry I cannot go down, but aunt is sick."

Anna Marie had not yet seen him save in the presence

of others, and evidently dreaded meeting him alone, — but was this unconcern real or assumed ?

“Ask the baron if he would not like to come up,” I suggested, with quick decision. “I am old enough to receive him here,” I added to Anna Marie.

“Come, my dear Edwin, if you are not afraid to see an old woman in her sick bed,” I called to him, as he entered, pointing to a chair by the side of my great canopied throne. Edwin Sturmer was the most self-possessed person I ever saw ; he was always master of the situation. Composedly, he seated himself beside me, and commenced chatting in his friendly way. Deeper and darker grew the twilight shadows, and soon Anna Marie’s busy hands ceased their work. As she listened to our talk of old times, I noticed her eyes resting on his face, and now and again a flush of pink tingeing her cheeks. She took very little part in the conversation, and in a few minutes rose suddenly, and left the room.

“My niece is very quiet, she does not seem well,” I remarked. “I am afraid the responsibility is too much for her.”

For a moment he was silent, then replied “She was always quiet and undemonstrative, Aunt Rosamunde.”

“No, no, Edwin, she is troubled at present, and feels worried about Klaus.”

“The last one in the world about whom she need worry,” he answered with a smile, and evidently wishing to drop the subject, continued, “but I forgot to ask where is Fräulein Mattoni ? ”

“Nearer you than you think, Edwin.”

“With the old witch, her duenna?” he asked, with such indifference that I fancied he was trying to conceal his real interest.

“You are right, the old woman is ill, and Susanne is nursing her. By the way, you will come to our harvest home, will you not? Anna Marie did say, *entre nous*, she intended to have as simple a celebration as possible, but of course you must not fail to be present.”

“What? how?” he asked absent-mindedly.

“For heaven’s sake, Edwin, where are your thoughts?” I queried chidingly.

He laughed, and kissed my hand. “Pardon me, Fräulein Rosamunde, I was thinking about Klaus.”

“And at what conclusion did you arrive?”

“I have been unable to reach any; he is a mystery to me.”

“Why?”

“Pardon me for not answering your question,” he replied, “but I envy him.”

“And may I know the reason?”

“Yes,” he continued, rising, “I envy his cool temperament. What useless emotion, what sleepless nights are spared to one who is blessed with so much calmness and composure!”

“But Klaus is not cold or indifferent. I do not understand you, Edwin,” I said, reproachfully; “he is no colder than Anna Marie and you yourself.”

Again he took his seat, and without noticing my in-



terruption, continued: "I do wish you would explain to me how they ever came to have this moderation, this indifference, this cool composure. Their father was eccentric, but he was a man of ardent feelings, almost passionate in his friendships. Perhaps they inherit it from their mother."

"I can assure you, Edwin," I repeated, almost wounded by his remarks, "you know very little about the children, or you would not talk in that strain. They are neither indifferent nor heartless; both of them are very warm in their attachments. Unfortunately, they inherit too much of their father's ardent nature. Believe me," I added, with a sigh, recalling the scene in the house of the Dambitz blacksmith.

Edwin Stürmer laughed. "Well, well," he said, "nothing is farther from my wish than to cast any reflection upon Klaus, it is incomprehensible to me,—that is all; and probably you do not understand me. Am I not right?"

"Oh, Edwin, of course Klaus was never a hot-headed fellow like you. I am fully aware of my brother's strong love for you, and how, thanks to your cheerful, lively disposition, he preferred your society to that of his own son. But let me tell you that it was the rash, variable disposition of their father that helped to make the children so earnest, so deliberate."

"Klaus is the best, the noblest of men," cried Stürmer enthusiastically. "Didn't I tell you I did not wish to cast any reflections on him? But he has not yet

learned what life is; he is unswervingly loyal to duty, is always deliberate and prudent, but to that exuberance of spirits, that bounding hope and enthusiasm which temporarily exalts us into blissful realms ordinarily inaccessible, to these, I say, he is as yet a total stranger. He has ever courted the golden mean, has always gone just so far and no farther, in short, he is a model man; but I repeat it, Aunt Rosamunde, he does not yet know what life is, and only because he does not, would he trust himself — as for me” —

He stopped suddenly, and after a pause added jocosely, “I should like to know how I ever came to deliver such a lecture to you.”

The room had grown so dark that by this time I could scarcely discern Stürmer’s profile. He twisted his beard nervously, and seemed uneasy.

“You may say what you please, Edwin, but I assure you the children are neither cold nor indifferent,” I asserted, and just at that moment Anna Marie entered the room.

“There will be light in a minute,” she said in a friendly voice, stepping to her chair. “Pardon my long absence, baron, but some household duties claimed my attention, and you know I have to be even more particular than usual, now that my brother is away.”

His only reply was a low bow. Anna Marie could scarcely have made a more ill-timed remark. It threw a damper over the conversation which did not again become easy and natural. There was delay in bringing the

light, and my niece was on the point of ringing for it, when the church bell began to sound quick, hasty notes of alarm.

“Fire,” cried Anna Marie in a terrified voice, hastening to the window. The garden was already bright with the reflection of the flames. Stürmer threw open a window and called to some one below, “Where is the fire?”

With fast throbbing heart I raised myself in bed. “Where, where is the fire?” repeated Anna Marie in a clear, shrill voice, for Stürmer’s words had been unheard amid the tumult.

“In Dambitz;” we at last caught the reply amid the tramping of the horses and wild confusion of the men. “*Sacre Dieu!*” murmured Stürmer, upsetting a chair in the darkness, “Dambitz!”

“I will make a light,” said Anna Marie quietly. “Excuse me a moment, I am going with you.”

The engine rattled through the yard below as the light flamed up under Anna Marie’s hand.

“Lend me a shawl, aunt, please, I will go over and see about Susanne; you need not feel worried. I am ready, Baron Stürmer, if you will allow me to go in your carriage,” and again the color mounted into her cheeks.

“The carriage is waiting, gnädiges Fräulein,” and with these words he hurried from the room.

“For heaven’s sake, Anna Marie,” I cried, “bring Susanne back with you.” Then for hours I lay alone with my thoughts. Mrs. Brockelmann came up once to

inform me that that the whole heavens were illuminated, and that it must be a very destructive fire. The little bell still sounded its warning notes, and I pictured to myself the burning houses, Stürmer and Anna Marie driving along the lonely road, and Susanne in danger. Involuntarily my thoughts turned to Klaus, "Take good care of my little Susanne, I will never cease to thank you for any kindness you may show her." "Dear Lord, protect her," I prayed earnestly in my anxiety.

Hour after hour passed away, the bell was at last silent; still Anna Marie came not. Mrs. Brockelmann told me the reflection was growing fainter and fainter. I heard the rattling of the returning wagons, then once more all was quiet in the garden. Again Mrs. Brockelmann came up and told me she had learned from the servants that the fire had originated in the second house from the blacksmith's, and that his house also was burned to the ground.

"Gracious heavens! and Anna Marie not yet returned."

The faithful old housekeeper seated herself by my bedside. "She is not thinking of herself," she moaned, "she will run into the burning house if it is possible. Oh God, if Mr. Klaus were only back."

Dear good Mrs. Brockelmann, how much better you understand Anna Marie than Edwin does.

"Gnädiges Fräulein," she then whispered, her thoughts already wandering in a far different channel, "do you know you must not take it amiss — the baron comes so

often nowadays, and this afternoon as I saw them driving away together I thought — I think they will be married.”

“Dear me, how can you talk such nonsense,” I replied somewhat aggrieved.

“Never mind, I tell you I believe there’ll be a wedding in this house before long, the large myrtle is full of buds, and I found a rose-king in the garden, and last New Year’s I listened at the door and overheard the young master say, ‘Invite to a wedding,’ yes it will come true, and then, but you must never intimate that you know it (remember I nursed Anna Marie from her very birth and have been with her ever since and understand her better than any one else), I know how she wept over that little letter the baron wrote her before he started on his long journey, and, gnädiges Fräulein, she always carries it with her. Oh, I see so many things that I should not see but — she cannot deceive me.”

But alas, at this moment I felt indifferent to all Mrs. Brockelmann related. The one thing for which I longed was tidings of Susanne; that was of primary importance. “Oh God,” I murmured, “if anything has happened to her!” and unable to rest quietly in bed any longer, I ordered Mrs. Brockelmann to assist me in dressing. At last a wagon rolled through the gate, drew up and stopped before the house. I raised myself and gazed at the door; surely Susanne had come. Mrs. Brockelmann hurried downstairs, I heard Anna Marie’s voice, and her familiar step and presently she entered my chamber.

“Tell me quick, where is Susanne?” I cried.

“With her old friend, whom the shock has really made very ill,” she quietly responded, as exhausted, she sank in a chair by my side.

“But Anna Marie,” I moaned, “the smith is burned out, is he not?”

“They are in the manor,” she replied softly, “Stürmer has given shelter to all whose homes were destroyed.”

“In the castle?” For a moment this intelligence had a quieting effect upon me, but soon I felt oppressed with the thought. “It’s impossible! You don’t mean it, Anna Marie? How could you allow Susanne to accept the hospitality of an unmarried man? It was very wrong and totally unlike you. You ought to have brought her here, and the old woman also.” My anxiety had led me to speak quickly and excitedly, and my niece looked at me in wonder and surprise.

“Isa is too ill to be moved,” she responded, “and Susanne lies beside her with rumpled hair and tear-stained cheeks. I had not the courage to tear her away, she is nearer and dearer to the old woman than any one else, and at such moments one does not stop to think of etiquette.”

I noticed now for the first time how pale and careworn my niece appeared. Her fair tresses were no longer confined in braids; one golden lock falling over her shoulder rested on her neat, dark green dress; her eyes were lowered, her mouth quivered.

“Poor child!” I said, seizing her hands, “it has been

too much for you, and I have been reproaching you.” She allowed her hands to lie passively in mine, but did not raise her eyes. “I am perfectly well,” she rejoined, “but it makes me sad to see so much suffering and misery, and be unable to render any relief. It was terrible, aunt. It cost one human life, almost two.” Her voice was unusually pathetic, as she continued: “One old man on the point of rescuing his cow from the burning stall, was crushed and buried under the falling timbers; his little granddaughter, who ran to help him, was carried out uninjured by Stürmer, but it was the last moment—a falling beam wounded his arm.”

Several times while narrating this sorrowful incident, she grew breathless and was obliged to pause. Then came a heartrending sigh, a sigh peculiar to herself, which I had often heard, even in her childhood, when she strove to drive back her tears. I pressed her hands in a closer clasp; they were hot and feverish, and the quick heavings of her breast betrayed her deep emotion.

“Noble, warm-hearted fellow, unselfish as usual,” I exclaimed softly; “thank God for protecting him.”

Then we remained quiet for a long time; the lights before the mirror burned low, and crackled and sputtered in their struggle for existence, while the clock on the bracket ticked unceasingly. Gladly would I have said to the dear girl by my side, “Come, Anna Marie, confide in me, it is not yet too late. See, I know your secret already. You love Edwin Stürmer. I have learned that for a certainty to-day. Anna Marie, it is



not yet too late." But how could I? She had not given me the least right, never allowed me to sympathize with her in her deep heart trouble. Oh, if she would only come herself and tell me all, she would soon learn that

"The burden too heavy for one to bear  
Grows light, when another takes up a share."

Pleadingly I pressed her hand. "Anna Marie, my poor child," I whispered. Then she started as from a dream, and nervously stroked the sunny tress falling over her shoulder.

"Susanne?" she asked. "Susanne escaped with only a severe fright. I led her over myself to the manor while one of Stürmer's old servants carried Isa; they will be well attended to, there. As soon as she is able, I shall, of course, have the old woman brought here, but at present it is impossible. It might have been injurious to Susanne also. I could not conceive of a more passionate outburst of grief than that in which she indulged to-day; she loves the old creature far more than I supposed, and her pitiful cry, 'Isa! Isa! if you die, I shall have nobody left in the whole world,' she repeated, till she was literally exhausted."

I listened as one stunned. "Anna Marie," I said, "I must go to Dambitz to-morrow."

She nodded. "I wish it were possible, for I really should much prefer not going."

"It must be possible, Anna Marie. But let us retire,

now, for we are both weary; good night! sweet slumbers!"

I lay on my couch, but sleep had forsaken me; visions of Klaus, Anna Marie, and Stürmer whirled through my brain in wildest confusion. I rose from my half doze at the fancied sound of Susanne's voice, "Isa! Isa! if you die, I shall have nobody left in the whole world." In my dreams, I retorted angrily, "Ungrateful little creature, have you not more than a thousand others? have you not the love of the best, the truest of hearts?" Again I awakened with a cry, for I saw Stürmer rush into the burning house, and fall beneath its crumbling walls, while Anna Marie stood passively by, with colorless face and dishevelled hair, her eyes blankly fixed upon the ruins, and she herself unable to weep or speak.

## CHAPTER XII.

THAT was a terrible, never-to-be-forgotten night. It almost pained me, the next morning, to see the bright sunlight and cloudless blue sky. Mrs. Brockelmann assisted me in dressing, for the pain in my arm had grown more severe, and was now unceasing.

Something was troubling the old woman. It was a peculiarity of hers, when anything especially worried or annoyed her, to catch up the hem of her apron, rub it vigorously, and, at the same time, fix her eyes on the person to whom she had something rather unpleasant to communicate. For a little while to-day I bore with her in silence ; but after she had fastened my shoes, and still remained crouching on the floor before me, rubbing her apron in this significant manner, and evidently making an effort to introduce some subject which it seemed difficult to mention, I, to relieve her embarrassment, said : "Come, Mrs. Brockelmann, let me hear what you have to say ; something is troubling you."

But instead of replying, she threw her apron over her face, and commenced to weep bitterly.

"Gnädiges Fräulein," she sobbed, "write for the master to come back soon, or as truly as I live, Anna Marie will be sick. The thought that he went away without bidding her good-by is gnawing like a worm at her heart.

She never complains, but she stays for hours in her brother's room, and when she comes out her eyes are always red from crying, and she says, 'Mrs. Brockelmann, brother would like to have it done this way,' and 'when Mr. Klaus is back again,' or, 'when Mr. Klaus comes home,' something like this is her constant cry. When Christian brings the mail bags, she runs to the yard to meet him. I happened to pass through the room when she was reading the first letter she received from Mr. Klaus. She did not notice me, but I saw the letter tremble in her hand, and heard her saying, 'He is not like himself, everything is different now.' Then she rose and rushed into the garden, and I looked after her and watched her, as I used to when she was a wild little creature running round, with her long plaits flying behind her. She paced up and down yonder in the place where her mother lies buried, up and down, up and down, probably an hour or more; it made no difference to her that the rain fell, and the wind almost blew her away. At last, when I could no longer endure the sight, I went up and asked her something about the house, and she came with me immediately. But last night, when she returned from the fire, she looked so miserably ill that I prepared her a glass of hot wine, and took it to her as soon as I knew she had gone to her own room, for I did not want to disturb you all in here. But would you believe it, Fräulein Rosamunde, when I went in I found her weeping, — weeping as if her heart would break. She did not see me, for she was leaning over the table looking

at a picture of Mr. Klaus, her hands trembled and her whole body quivered. I shut the door softly and withdrew, for you see it would have been terrible for her to know that any one saw her emotion. She never could endure people to give way to their feelings. But to-day I could not rest; so please do write to the master, gnädiges Fräulein, and tell him to come back soon; if he was only here, all would be right again."

Dear old Mrs. Brockelmann, would that this could set all right again! Yes, Klaus will come back, but never again will Bütze be as it once was; no, never again!

Regarding my silence as an assent, Mrs. Brockelmann, drying her eyes, continued, "And gnädiges Fräulein, I know very well when these troubles commenced. If I had had my way, I would have said to Christian, when the carriage containing the old actress drove up the yard, 'Christian, for God's sake, turn back, these are birds that will never suit in our nest.' But alas, it's always the way, people like me must say nothing, but only look on and hear. The master is kind-hearted, Fräulein, too kind-hearted; God grant that it may never amount to more than kind-heartedness and sympathy. It makes me very angry to hear the servants and the folks in the village say, 'Mr. Klaus seems very much pleased with the strange young miss.' Rieke got a good box on the ears for it, but what good did it do? the thing had been said, and could not be taken back. Oh, if Fräulein Anna Marie should ever hear it! Even if it is a lie," she continued, after a short pause

looking confidently at me, "for the master can any day he chooses get the loveliest and best lady in the land; oh, if Fräulein Anna Marie heard it, it would make her sick."

"Are the people talking about it already?" I murmured, as the old woman left the room; after all, they are not very far from the truth. Mrs. Brockelmann told me this partly because she fears it is so, and partly because she wished to know my opinion on the subject. Only Anna Marie refuses to believe it, she has other troubles."

As I went downstairs to step into the carriage which was about to take me to Dambitz, my niece came out of Klaus's room, composed and friendly as usual; every trace of the storm through which she had passed yesterday had disappeared. She inquired how I had slept, and mentioned that she had just returned from the fields. "The harvest has been unusually bountiful this year," she continued, "when you ride past the wheat fields just notice the sheaves; how pleased Klaus will be!"

When I was seated in the buggy, she placed a small package in my hands, saying, "Please give it to Baron Stürmer for the sufferers by the fire. Klaus will be perfectly satisfied," and with deeply crimsoned cheeks, added, "it is part of the proceeds of the milk sales; you know that is my own money."

Touched by her quiet, unostentatious generosity, I nodded good-by and the carriage rolled away in the

fragrance of that fresh pleasant autumn morning. The gentle wind wafted to me the delightful odor of the pine forests; a golden mist hovered over the distant heath, and the heavens seemed higher and bluer than I had seen them for a long time. And yet the nearer I approached Dambitz and its linden-surrounded manor house, the heaven seemed the air, and the more oppressed grew my breathing. We drove past the burned houses; the charred ruins were still smoking, and from the *debris* rose thin, grey columns of smoke; a very unpleasant smell issued from the smouldering embers, but the men were already busy digging out and clearing away. The blacksmith's home was partially torn down, and the tottering gable wall was warped from the intense heat; the young wife was rummaging in a lively way among her household goods, which, regardless of her wishes, had been thrown into the street, and were now lying in a confused mass, — beds, clothing, dishes, and furniture, all tossed together. On a chest sat an aged grandmother weeping bitterly; the coachman told me that it was her husband who had lost his life the previous night. A girl of some sixteen summers, with swollen and still moist eyes, was searching diligently among the wet, half-burned plunder for some lost treasure.

“Poor creatures!” I thought, “no one can restore to you the dear one you have lost, but we will do all in our power to help you rebuild and make happy homes for yourselves once more.” Then I looked at the small but heavy roll in my hand; it was no insignificant sum of



gold. Happy is he who can give and give gladly, when prompted by feelings of love. We were now driving along the garden wall, the large artistic iron door stood open, apparently unclosed since last night. At this point an opening in the luxuriant foliage afforded a vista of green velvety lawn and gayly blooming parterres, across which the eye swept with pleasure to the white palatial building in the distance. Awnings protected the veranda from the rays of the sun, and a black and white Prussian flag fluttered briskly in the morning wind. A charming freshness pervaded the garden, not a single withered or yellow leaf was to be seen in the broad gravel walks; everything was the perfection of neatness and beautiful regularity.

I ordered the coachman to stop, and alighted from the carriage to walk through the grounds, scarcely knowing what induced me to do so. Long years had elapsed since I last visited this spot; then I was in the bloom of youth and was accompanied by my sister-in-law, while Klaus and Edwin, wild little youngsters, scampered on merrily before us. Wonderfully homelike seemed all the surroundings! There was the same little rustic bridge, the artificial channel, generally dry, but in which to-day, I heard the babbling of the water. The trees were far higher, the bowers more luxuriant, and from among the dark green of the yew-trees, peeped a white marble figure of Diana. At every step I was encountered by some new token of Edwin Stürmer's keen appreciation and love of the beautiful. At Bütze

we never entertained a thought of ornamenting our place with marble statuary and English lawns; no one had ever expressed a wish to see a fountain play and sparkle in among the groups of magnificent old elms; no, our old garden remained as it had been for years; its gnarled oaks, its primitive arbors and bowers, and its old-fashioned, flower-bedecked grassplats were unaltered, but it was homelike and dear to us, and remains so to this day.

I followed a well-shaded road which I knew led past the side of the house, but suddenly I paused — could I be mistaken? no, Susanne's ringing laugh sounded through the bushes, like the warbling of a nightingale. Susanne in the garden? Susanne laughing?

I started on and stepped into a little rondel, surrounded by old lindens, in the centre of which, mounted on a stone pedestal, stood a figure of Flora. The monthly roses were in full bloom, and mingled their perfume with that of the modest mignonette. Near by was a group of dainty garden seats, and on one of these benches leaned Susanne, looking with smiling admiration at a bouquet of roses which Stürmer had just given her.

He stood before her, his arm still in a sling, gazing down upon her. She had evidently bestowed much care upon her toilet; the time spent with Isa in her sickness had not passed unemployed. She was still in mourning, and her fair neck and arms gleamed white as marble beneath their airy covering of fine black lace; a pale

rose fastened the kerchief upon her breast and another was gracefully twined among her dark tresses. Susanne Mattoni was charming in her half Spanish garb, and yet had she come to meet me from the side of Isa's sick bed with ruffled hair and careless dress, had she worn, instead of the lace, one of Anna Marie's substantial aprons, had I seen upon her countenance even the faintest trace of the last terrible night, I should have thrown my arms around the poor child's neck and said, "Come, Susanne, my little Susanne, your shelter is in Bütze."

But now — but now —

My heart throbbed. In the next moment I stood beside her, endeavoring to say in as friendly a way as possible, "I have come to take you back with me, Susanne."

Stürmer was pleased to see me and raised my hand to his lips. "My best, my dearest Aunt Rosamunde, at last I can welcome you to Dambitz!" he cried. Susanne seemed transfixed at my unexpected appearance. "Now my child," I said, as the baron gave me a chair and went into the house, "how is Isa? quite well again, I suppose."

Susanne shook her head, and responded, "No, Isa is still very weak."

"Who is nursing her then?" I asked, a little sharply.

"Herr von Stürmer has engaged a woman to nurse her," she replied, "who I am sure will be more competent than I."

"And you were just about coming back to Bütze?"

I asked severely. Susanne dropped her head assentingly, and with a scarlet glow upon her face said softly, "Yes."

She had understood me.

"Let us go then, my child; we will not delay." Raising myself I stepped on in advance. Susanne followed slowly but over her face crept a look of dissatisfaction. On the manor steps we again met the baron, whose countenance still wore an expression of happy surprise.

"Oh, dear Aunt Rosamunde, you will surely stay and breakfast with us," he insisted, extending his uninjured arm to help me up the steps. "It is such a rare opportunity, 'twill be a real treat."

He looked at me so beseechingly, seemed so truly glad to see me, that I could not politely refuse. Moreover the presence of my old favorite threw such a spell upon me that I smilingly allowed myself to be led along.

Susanne flew up the steps, her lace-bedecked dress blowing about and displaying her tiny feet; the rose fell from her hair and dropped before Edwin Stürmer, who picked it up and held it as if mechanically in his hand. Susanne disappeared behind the glass door of the vestibule. Stürmer's eyes followed her awhile, but soon turned to me, and for a moment we looked at one another, as if trying to read each other's soul. Then he led me silently through the rooms of his home.

How often had I been here in bygone days! I had always remembered with pleasure the large yet cosy,

homelike rooms, with their deep, oaken wainscotings, and their massive tiled stoves, which, projecting far into the room, presented an inviting appearance to the half-frozen guests as they arrived in sleighs from Bütze. I had always dreamed that some time Anna Marie would rule and reign here as mistress, but how faded, how miserably dim seemed this picture as I entered the first room.

Where were now the inviting apartments, the dark wainscotings, the old tiled stoves? Outlandish, indeed, seemed the gilding and the gay mosaics on the walls, the unique draperies hanging from windows and doors, the small crimson divans instead of the large, old-time sofas, the perishable tables (mere shells), the mirrors reaching from ceiling to floor, the rare exotics in every corner and the fans lying beside the seats; even the floor was covered with a rich Smyrna rug so thick and soft that one's feet sank noiselessly into it. In astonishment I remained standing on the threshold.

“*Mon dieu*, Edwin, have you become a Turk?”

“It is my parlor suit that I brought back with me from Stamboul,” was his simple response. “Unfortunately I cannot conjure up the Eastern prospect. Only imagine that wall away, and in its place slender columns of marble forming a covered entrance; imagine the view between these pillars stretching away out to the open blue sea, and hundreds of white sails on the swelling waters; fancy you see the pines bending in the fresh sea wind and there a charming cypress grove; picture to

yourself, leaning on the balustrade, one of those beautiful children of that sunny south, graceful as a gazelle, a pair of sparkling brown eyes shining from under a white veil, then you will have a sight on which I gazed daily in those happy times."

How did it happen that in the midst of that fairy picture which he painted for me, I saw Anna Marie standing in her dark dress, the basket of keys hanging from her arm, and her large, clear eyes looking with astonishment on all this magnificence? Involuntarily I smiled, I could never think of Anna Marie reclining in sweet indolence on those richly upholstered seats. The thought was laughable, yet with the laughter was mingled pain; it made me sad.

I followed him through the numerous apartments. Everything presented an appearance of elegance and luxury; strange-looking imported furniture abounded, but there were at least inviting, comfortable chairs. The air was redolent with the fragrance of roses, and the costly carpets were of lavishly rich foreign material. In a room lighted by one window, a dainty little table, sparkling with crystal and silver, was already spread for three persons. Edwin led me to the seat at his right hand. "Your little *protégée* will be here soon," he said gayly, kissing my hand and again assuring me of his great happiness in seeing me in Dambitz. "I really cannot tell," he continued jocosely, "why you have not come long ago to visit me in my solitude."

"Why did you never tell us, Edwin, that you had so

many rare treasures from 'The Thousand and One Nights'?" I rejoined.

"I do not like to boast," he said, and offered me a mayonnaise, but I declined it and took instead some cold chicken. "My acquaintances have seen them all as they passed through Dambitz, and Klaus has often been here. I just took for granted that my Bütze friends were not interested in such things."

Well, in fact, Klaus had never told us much about them, at most he had not more than mentioned the rare collection of curiosities from foreign lands; he had no special fondness himself for such relics and antiques. Edwin Stürmer rose. I fancied I saw a smile playing round his lips and felt annoyed by it, although I knew not why. Immediately, however, it was superseded by a quite different expression as he opened the door and admitted Susanne, having evidently heard her steps. She seated herself directly opposite him at the richly served table; over her dark head waved a large fan-shaped palm leaf, and white blossoms forced their way between her shoulders and chair, while from the midst of a group of southern plants in the other corner rose a stately statue of purest marble, the Venus of Milo.

And yet this rich little apartment seemed only a frame to Susanne's peculiar beauty. Her face wore an expression of sadness, she ate nothing and only occasionally moistened her lips from her fine cut goblet; she was unusually quiet, and when she raised her long lashes, I saw tears glistening in her eyes. Stürmer had like-



wise little to say, he mentioned the fire and told me that they expected to begin rebuilding to-morrow.

I delivered my niece's package, he flushed for a moment, but did not thank me with the warmth I had anticipated.

"And now," I said, rising after the dessert, "I will relieve you of a burden, I will take Isabella and Susanne home with me; such patients must interfere with the arrangements of your old bachelor household. Susanne, be kind enough to take me to Isa."

Susanne's eyes sought Stürmer's but he turned away. "I am afraid the old woman is hardly strong enough yet to bear the journey," he replied politely, and "moreover it is no trouble to us to have her here. Of course she would have a better nurse at Bütze, here she can have only a hired attendant." Offering me his arm he led me along the corridor to a door (which Susanne, hurrying before, opened), then turned back and I entered the large, cheerful room, evidently the guest chamber.

Its windows were shaded by grand old lindens, and commanded a good view of the garden. Isabella lay in a magnificent bed with heavy white draperies, she and Susanne were unmistakably occupying this apartment. A second bed was still unmade, and its pillows and coverings were carelessly tossed together. Susanne's whole store of ribbons, laces, and showy fineries lay scattered round the room; shabby dresses, cooking utensils, and cosmetic jars were all mixed together on the floor in dire disorder, just as they had been rescued from the

burning house. An old woman, probably the nurse of whom Susanne had spoken, attired in the neatest of dresses and daintiest of white caps, stood in the midst endeavoring to bring order out of confusion.

I went straight to the bed. "Mamselle Pfannenschmidt," I asked, "are you well enough to drive back with Susanne and me to Bütze?"

"No," she replied, looking angrily at me.

"Very well, then," I responded coolly, "you can come later, as soon as you feel able to do so. Are you ready, Susanne?"

"Susanne is going to stay with me," she cried, in a voice tremulous with anger.

"She is going with me," I repeated quietly, "save yourself any further trouble. I will not allow Susanne to remain in the house of an unmarried man; according to our ideas, it is very improper."

"Under my protection," screeched Isabella, starting up in bed, "under my protection?"

Quietly shrugging my shoulders I turned to Susanne, who stood motionless, gazing at Isa. "Are you going to take the child back the second time? won't you allow her to remain with me even on my deathbed? Susie, darling, stay with me."

"You are not going to die yet awhile, my friend," I said, in a clear voice. "Be kind enough to submit quietly to my arrangements, they are for Susanne's own good." She made no further remonstrance, but looked at me in silence, as I fastened a shawl around the child's shoulders

and put on her head the straw hat I had taken from the wilderness of rubbish on the floor.

“I will ask Baron Stürmer to have you driven over to Bütze as soon as you are able to stand the fatigue of the journey,” I said, turning again to Isabella, “in the meanwhile, you will be in good hands. Good-by. Without further ceremony I pushed Susanne into the hall, hearing behind me the shrill cry, “Susanne, Susanne, stay with me.”

She stood still, as if about to offer resistance and hurry back..

“Go on, my child,” I said energetically. “You have already been away from Bütze too long. I shall never forgive myself for allowing you to come.” Her face was pale, and I noticed her hands were clenched, but she quietly followed me.

Stürmer was waiting for us at the carriage which had just driven up to the house; in his hand he held a bunch of roses which Susanne had left in the garden early this morning, and handed them to her with a bow, which, according to my ideas, was rather more profound than necessary. The look he gave her I did not see, as he turned his back to me for a moment, but I noticed a deep scarlet rise in the girl’s cheeks, and from under her long lashes she cast a responsive glance which quite alarmed me. I scarcely heard the greetings he sent to Anna Marie, saying he would thank her in person for the money. Drawing the veil over my face I nodded to the coachman, and soon the horses were rattling over the

garden drive and along the turnpike; Susanne cast long glances behind her, and as her eyes wandered to the windows of the stately house, two shining teardrops fell upon her roses.

Suddenly I caught her by the arm and said sharply, "Susanne Mattoni, Bütze lies before, not behind you." She turned quickly with a little cry, her face had grown pale, but her eyes flashed rebelliously.

"You punish me as if I was a naughty child," she retorted with quivering lips, "what have I done wrong? I followed you without the least resistance."

"Ask your own heart, Susanne," I replied earnestly. She colored and commenced to weep bitterly.

"Isa, Isa," she sobbed.

"Are you really weeping for Isa?" I asked quietly, taking her hand. "I do not think so, something else troubles you. Come, confide in me, I might be able to help you if you would only be sincere."

Thrusting away my hand, she replied hastily, "No, never, never!"

"But if I only knew what worries you, Susanne, I might be able to do so with one word."

She ceased weeping and her mouth assumed a look of defiant opposition. "I do not wish any sympathy," she said with inimitable pride, "there is nothing at all wrong with me; can I not be allowed to cry when poor old Isa is sick, and alone in a strange house? Remember, she has taken care of me since I was a child."

I offered no reply, but thought how I had met her this

morning, certainly, not at the bedside of the sick. She understood my silence perfectly, for she drooped her eyes and did not venture to raise them during the whole drive. Oh it was such a beautiful sunshiny day. My gaze followed a lark in its heavenward flight, as exultingly and rejoicingly it rose on trembling wings higher and higher, till it seemed a mere speck. A flock of partridges flew over the fields of stubble as we drove rapidly past; cows were pasturing in the meadows, far away in the blue ethereal vapors, heaven and earth seemed to meet and greet in loving embrace, and soon from amongst the variegated foliage of the oaks and elms, I espied the sunlit roofs of Bütze, — Bütze, our dear old homestead! It seemed like a dream, I fancied myself returning from a long journey in foreign lands, and once more reaching the home of my childhood.

Anna Marie stood in the door, as usual, with the inevitable apron and bunch of keys. In her hand was a cluster of beautiful white asters, and as Susanne ascended the steps she drew the child to her, shyly slipped the blossoms into her hand beside the roses, and said, "Thank God, Susanne, that you are home uninjured; it was a terrible night." One could see the joy sparkling in her face. "How is Isa?" she inquired, "and how is Baron Stürmer's arm?" Then noticing that Susanne had been weeping, she appealed to me for an answer, and on learning that both were doing well, turned again and said: —

"Don't cry, Susanne," and with her young, earnest

countenance, softened by love and sympathy, added, "as soon as Isa is better she is coming here, and then you can nurse her till she is quite well."

Anna Marie was a changed being; there was a gentleness in her manner and a softness in her voice which could have been produced by nothing less than the consciousness of some great happiness, and unspeakable thankfulness for something she felt was undeserved. This marked change cut and lashed my heart as with a hundred knives.

Susanne excused herself from the table, saying she was suffering with headache, and during the whole afternoon failed to appear in the parlor. She was pouting. Anna Marie had taken her sewing and was sitting opposite me in the window recess; all was quiet and cosy in the homelike room, so peaceful, but a threatening future was approaching with lightning speed, and soon grim discord drove sweet peace from our home.

"I wonder if Klaus would miss me aunt, if I should suddenly be called away from, Bütze; for instance, if I should die?" asked Anna Marie abruptly. Then laying her hand quickly on my arm, she added, "Never mind, please don't answer my question, I know myself; I am sure he would miss me sadly."

After a short time, during which neither of us had spoken, the coachman brought in the mail bag and handed it to Anna Marie. Taking the key from her pocket she opened the pouch, drew out the contents, and exclaimed in pleased surprise, "Oh, a letter from Klaus,

and a thick one too. Just look, aunt!" Holding up a formidable package, she continued, "why this is queer, — it is for you."

I started as if I had been convicted of some crime. "Give it to me," I said, and broke the seal with trembling hand, for I had a presentiment of what it contained. An inclosed note to Anna Marie fell in my lap, and (as she had already opened a business letter) I stealthily covered it with my handkerchief, and commenced to read: —

"DEAREST AUNT, — When I left home some weeks ago, I told you at the last moment I should leave a few lines for my sister in which I would inform her of my love for Susanne Mattoni and of my intention to make her my wife. Although I fully intended writing, I thought best to abandon the idea, and to say nothing further about the matter until my return, when I should have an opportunity of talking it over quietly with her. Again I have changed my opinion and decided that it will be best to write. When I ask you to hand the enclosed to Anna Marie, I do so principally because I should like her to make a confidant of you. If I should write directly to her, so reserved is her disposition that I feel sure she would never mention the subject to you. Now, however, she will be obliged to speak of it, and so will find it much easier to bear what cannot be changed. Of course after all that has passed between us, I am fully aware that it will be hard for my sister, very hard. My decision, however, is unalterable. I love Susanne, and God will help us to overcome our troubles and will not allow our hearts (Anna Marie's and mine), which have so long beaten in unison, to be separated. I am coming as soon as I hear from you, I am more homesick than I can tell you."

The epistle sank into my lap, the letters fairly danced before my eyes, how should I, how could I, begin to break such information to my niece!



As I hastily rose, the note for Anna Marie dropped to the floor, she raised her head, looked inquiringly at me, and saw that I was struggling to compose myself.

“Aunt Rosamunde,” she asked, stooping and picking up the note, “what is it? bad news from Klaus? Tell me, tell me all.” Kneeling beside my chair, her anxious eyes sought to discover in my countenance what I had heard from her brother.

“No, no, no, my child,” I said, trying to get the letter from her hand.

“It is for me,” she said, quickly snatching it back.

One desperate struggle, and I was master of my excited nerves. “It is for you, Anna Marie, I acknowledge and it contains” —

“I will see for myself,” she interrupted, with pitiful anxiety in her voice. Rising from the floor she seated herself in one of the deep window-niches in the hall; I could not see her form, but heard in the stillness the rustling of the paper; my heart fairly thumped. The moments, fraught with suspense, seemed an eternity, then a cry of despair rang through the room. I sprang towards my niece; her fair head lay upon the window-sill, her face was buried in her hands, and a heartrending moaning filled the air.

“For God’s sake, Anna Marie, try to compose yourself; do not give way to such grief, it is wicked; your brother is not dying.” But she did not stir, only moaned and groaned as if enduring some intense physical pain.

“Anna Marie, my dear Anna Marie,” I said, pityingly.

“For this, was it only for this, that I have sacrificed so much, suffered so severely?” she cried, raising her pale, agonized face; then, throwing up her arms and clasping her hands, whispered, “My brother, my only brother!” and rushed from the room.

I remained behind as one stunned. I had never looked for anything like this, and was entirely unprepared for such an outburst of passionate grief.

A painful silence now pervaded the whole house, and naught was heard save the clicking of my steps on the tiled floor of the corridor before my niece’s room, as I stood there listening for some sound; but behind that door all was quiet as the grave.

The evening shadows gathered thick and fast; night spread its sable covering over the earth, and innumerable stars studded the distant firmament, casting their peaceful light upon the weary world below. “No speech nor language, their voice is not heard,” and yet they seemed to say, “How trifling, how insignificant art thou, O man! how fleeting thy petty cares and trials! fold thy hands and look heavenward.” Involuntarily I clasped my hands and whispered, “He who giveth the stars for a light by night, will surely show us the light of his countenance and dispel the dark shadows now clouding our pathway.”

When the clock struck eleven I knocked at Susanne’s door, there was no response, so I softly entered the

room; the light on the mantel had burned low but its unsteady glimmer showed me Stürmer's roses in water in a vase on a stand near the bed, and a happy smile hovering over the features of the fair sleeper.

It was a dreadful morning which next dawned upon Bütze. Anna Marie remained in her room, refusing to respond to our repeated knockings, and not a sound was heard within her chamber. Mrs. Brockelmann's eyes were red and swollen, she went through the house shaking her head, and treading on tiptoe as if there was a death in the family. Almost wild with despair, I limped back and forth from my niece's door. The overseers came and inquired for her, then departed, wondering at her non-appearance.

At eight o'clock I went quietly to Susanne who had just risen and was busy arranging her hair. Her windows were wide open, and through the branches of the trees golden sunbeams darted into the room, and peeped roguishly at the white-robed figure standing before the mirror, making a leisurely toilet. Evidently she had not seen me, for my entrance caused no interruption in the sweet song she was trilling. Clear as a bell the bird-like notes rang out upon the fragrant air, and bright as the morning itself was the smile that illumined her face. Isabella's sick bed was forgotten, and perhaps other things as well. I carefully closed the door and retreated, never in all my life before had I experienced such anxiety.

"Is Fräulein Anna Marie ill?" queried Susanne, as

she noticed that the dinner table was spread for only two persons. She had just come from the garden, a bunch of white asters was fastened on her breast, and her eyes beamed with joy.

"I think so," I responded softly, folding my hands to ask the divine blessing. A sympathizing look flittered over her features, but she soon commenced chatting merrily and seemed in excellent spirits.

The day ended at length. Anna Marie still remained in her room. Mrs. Brockelmann was beside herself with grief. "She cries and cries, as if her heart was breaking," she informed me when she came into my room before bedtime.

"She is crying? Well, I am glad of it," I said, with a feeling of relief.

"She has never wept so much in her whole life as she has to-day," whispered the old woman, "something must have wounded her very deeply."

"I am not at liberty to tell you what it is, Mrs. Brockelmann," I replied, "but you will soon know." I pitied the poor woman, for she was trembling violently.

"I believe you, gnädiges Fräulein; but I shouldn't wonder if it came from that quarter," she rejoined, pointing to Susanne's room, "one woman can destroy the peace of a whole country."

The following day was Sunday; a Sabbath solemnity pervaded the house and grounds, and the stillness was peculiarly impressive. Anna Marie had not yet left her room.

Sorrowfully I dressed for church, and then went to Susanne's room to see if she was ready. The door stood ajar, and as I peeped in I saw her lying on the bed, drowsily stretching out her hands and arms, like a tired kitten. On the whole I was glad, for my heart was so heavy that I really preferred being alone.

The little church was exceptionally well filled, there being a specially good attendance of the people from Dambitz; mutual exposure to danger, and preservation from an impending calamity, had drawn them hither; moreover, all were interested and curious to hear what the minister would say about the fire. Thus it happened that every seat in the little nave was occupied, and only the galleries containing the pews for the lords and ladies of the manors remained partially empty.

"What our Father does is well," sang the congregation, and I clasped my hands upon my book, while tears dropped from my eyes; my lips uttered no words, but never before did I pray more fervently for Klaus and Anna Marie. God knows what troubled thoughts rose in my mind; during the previous night I had been battling against one, "if Anna Marie shouldn't yield; if she should defiantly, in spite of entreaties, leave the old home rather than live with Susanne," — I knew her disposition, and felt that it was possible, — what would then become of them?

At that moment the door of the gallery creaked softly upon its hinges, and standing upon the threshold I saw the subject of my thoughts. Was it really she? Yes,

Anna Marie herself, with pale countenance and dark circles under the eyes, and beside her, even paler than she, stood Susanne, with her eyes fixed imploringly upon me. Claspings her hand, my niece led her to the pew in which, from time immemorial, the ladies of Bütze had offered their prayers and sung God's praises, and which of late years had been occupied by Anna Marie herself.

With a crimson glow upon her cheeks, the child sank into the seat and bowed her head. Anna Marie sat behind her and folded her hands, and I could see that she had conquered herself, and bent her iron will in subjection to her brother; what she had suffered in so doing was depicted on every feature of her face.

Only once during the service did she raise her head, that was when Pastor Grüne referred to the man who had lost his life in the Dambitz fire, and in a few pointed, impressive words, returned thanks to the Lord for protecting the one who had risked his life to rescue a perishing brother. At this touching allusion, I saw her cast a wistful glance towards Stürmer's empty pew; Susanne, also, raised her lashes, but lowered them shyly, as if conscious of having done something improper.

As we were returning home, Anna Marie walked beside me, with her usual firm step, still holding Susanne's hand in hers. There was something unusually solemn in her manner, and when we reached the garden, drawing Susanne close to her, she said, —

“Try to make him happy, Susanne; there is no nobler, better man in the world than my brother. God has filled

your cup of happiness to overflowing." Then, kissing her forehead, she stepped down the garden path, while Susanne threw her arms suddenly around my neck, and sobbed convulsively.

"But, Susanne, does this not make you very happy?" I asked. No answer, save a tighter clasp of her arms.

"Have you considered that you will now have a home of your own, and with it the heart of the best and truest of men, and that he loves you more dearly than everything else in the world?"

She gave a sudden start and ceased weeping.

"Come, Susanne," I continued in a friendly tone, "you belong to us, now, our home is yours, and I am your Aunt Rosamunde; let us go down to Anna Marie, you have not spoken a friendly word to her yet."

Throwing back her head, she seemed to ponder the matter a moment, then actually flew from the room, and I heard no sound save her retreating footsteps. "I must go myself and learn from Anna Marie just what really happened," I murmured, turning towards the garden. Klaus was engaged—how often had I fancied it must come, and yet, after all, it seemed incredible. A mist appeared to hover before my eyes, and the prospect looked dismal indeed.

I found my niece standing by the little pond, gazing into its brown waters, and she quietly and confidently slipped her hand in mine.



“My dear Anna Marie,” I said, “it is God who draws human hearts together.”

She nodded a speechless assent.

“Will you write to Klaus?” I queried further.

“I have already done so; I sent him a letter last night.”

“It was no easy task for you, my dear.”

She demurred to this with a wave of her hand, saying softly, “My brother is very dear to me.”

“May I be allowed to ask when you mentioned this subject to Susanne, Anna Marie?”

“Early this morning,” she responded, “I did just as my brother desired. He wishes their marriage to take place at an early date, and will not return until shortly before it, in order that it may not be necessary to find another home for Susanne; unfortunately, she will be obliged to spend the time of her engagement without her betrothed, it seems the only alternative. He wishes nothing said about their betrothal; it is not to be announced until a few weeks before the wedding ceremony.”

She had spoken quickly, but suddenly relapsed into silence, breathing deeply.

“And did he tell you all this in the letter you received day before yesterday?”

“All, aunt.”

“And Susanne?”

“I do not know,” she replied; “I did not look at her, and she made not a single remark. Perhaps the happi-

ness made her dumb," she added, inquiringly, as if wishing to say, "I cannot speak from experience; such a happiness has never been mine."

"Tell me, dear child," I said, seizing her hand, "tell me, did you never realize that Klaus entertained stronger feeling than mere sympathy and friendship for the beautiful young creature?"

For a short time she remained silent, but I noticed the deep heaving of her breast. "No," she responded at last, "I never thought that my brother would stoop to pluck such a poisonous flower."

An indescribable bitterness and heartfelt sorrow pervaded her words; then, as if she had expressed herself too strongly, and was unable to control her emotion any longer, she sobbed, "He is my only brother, and I cannot prevent him from taking this step, I cannot shield him from this illusion; no, I have no right to do so." She uttered these words with a wild cry of despair, and hot tears gushed from between her fingers.

I stepped up to embrace and comfort her, but she motioned me back. "Let me alone," she entreated, "I do not want to weep, I thought I was stronger," and drawing out her handkerchief she wended her way toward the shady path which lay before us.

## CHAPTER XIII.

A FEW hours later a carriage drove up the garden. I recognized Stürmer's livery, and from the window of my room watched Mrs. Brockelmann as she rather ungraciously assisted the old actress to alight.

"So we are to have an excuse of a mother-in-law in the house," I whispered, with a scornful smile, although tears were dropping upon the lavender ties of my cap. Like the very personification of misfortune, the miserable creature hobbled up the front steps. O Klaus, Klaus, how did you make such a mistake? The glory of our whole house seemed tarnished in that moment, and I could do nothing in this unfortunate affair, — nothing, except try to raise Susanne to a higher plane, by keeping her away from everything that would remind her of the frivolities and miserable dissipations of the sphere in which she had been born and bred, and by constantly talking to her of the happiness which had fallen to her lot and helping her to realize that the lady of Hegewitz was expected to be a model of dignity, a paragon of pure, noble womanhood. I longed to pack Isabella Pfannenschmidt into the carriage, and banish her to some distant clime, yet involuntarily I stepped out of my door when I heard her slow, dragging step approaching.

"Please come into my room a minute before you go to Susanne," I greeted her, scarcely knowing what prompted me to do so. Instinctively I felt that I must talk to her before she heard from the girl's own lips this last turn of the wheel of fortune.

Slowly, mistrustingly, the shrivelled little creature complied with my request. Exceedingly shabby she appeared to me in her crumpled bonnet and threadbare silk mantle; her countenance was more sallow and careworn than usual, and her figure bent in a manner indicative of pain. She seated herself in the nearest chair and gazed sharply at me as I stood before her vainly endeavoring to speak. All the trickery, the low cunning and craft which shone from her small, keen eyes reminded me anew of the demoralizing atmosphere which Susanne had been accustomed to breathe. With these thoughts possessing my mind I desisted from my restless pacing and seated myself opposite the actress, whose eyes had not ceased to follow me. I wanted to tell her of the great, great happiness that had fallen to Susanne's portion, but again speech failed and my lips were sealed.

"I'd like to tell you," I began at last hesitatingly, but was interrupted by the entrance of my niece, who said, "Aunt dear, I should like to speak a moment with Isabella Pfannenschmidt." Greatly relieved I stepped into the adjoining room.

Soon I heard Anna Marie's strong, forcible voice speaking of the great happiness in store for Susanne,

and expressing a sincere wish that the girl would, to the utmost of her ability, reward her brother's fond devotion and the unswerving trust he placed in her.

There was something so pathetic in my niece's voice, that again tears came into my eyes. I pictured to myself the proud girl standing before the strolling actress, conversing with her as with an equal. That which I had thought her incapable of doing, she did now from pure love to her brother. I supposed the old woman would, of course, burst into an ecstasy of joy, and I already shuddered at the thought of her theatrical expression of delight at her darling's happiness. But no, she answered coolly and quietly; I could not hear distinctly, but it sounded like a murmur of dissatisfaction.

"I do not comprehend you," my niece replied, in a freezing tone, "if I have understood my brother's letter aright, Susanne told him she accepted his love the evening she ran away to you. What are you trying to insinuate? Has she in the meantime changed her mind?"

Again there was a muttering, and between the sobs of the old woman I caught the disconnected words, "Responsibility — true love, etc." This homeless creature was as pretentious and aspiring as a reigning princess who was making preparations to give her daughter's hand in marriage to one inferior in rank. Then I heard her leave the room and stepping in I found Anna Marie standing by the window, her forehead leaning on the glistening pane, her slightly clenched hand resting upon the sill, and her lips pressed firmly together.

“Anna Marie,” I said, “this creature must not be permitted to remain in our house.”

“Klaus must decide that,” she responded, softly. “I have no longer the right to say anything about it.”

“She is very presumptuous,” I supplemented, angrily.

Turning, my niece replied, “Aunt, she loves Susanne as dearly as if she were her own child, and even in case of a seemingly most advantageous marriage, a mother will naturally inquire ‘will it be for the child’s best interest?’ I must not feel hurt, it would be wrong to do so.”

I pressed her hand softly. Despite her pain and grief, her noble unselfishness developed and expanded like buds after a summer shower. God grant she may be right in the excuses she offers for Susanne’s foster-mother!

After the lapse of half an hour, Isabella Pfannenschmidt returned, accompanied by Susanne, whose face was red and tear-stained and her hair sadly dishevelled. They both approached Anna Marie, and Susanne made a motion as if she would embrace her, but suddenly dropped her hand and the two girls, so totally unlike in character and disposition, remained for a moment silently facing each other. Anna Marie’s countenance paled, but she placed her arm around Susanne’s fair, round shoulders and drew her to her. Freeing herself from this embrace the child fell humbly at my niece’s feet, as if she wished to supplicate pardon for some grievous wrong; no sound escaped her lips, but she gazed up

into Anna Marie's face with a look I can never forget. For once I believed she was truly sincere, but before my niece could stoop to raise her, Isabella grasped her shoulders and in a harsh, hasty tone said, "Get up, Susanne, and try to act as if you had a little common-sense."

Whether the woman deemed it too profound a mark of respect to offer her future sister-in-law, or whether she feared that her darling would now, once for all, subordinate herself to Anna Marie's strict *régime*, I could not then decide. Later, I learned what a critical moment that was in Susanne's life.

The next three days passed slowly and monotonously. Anna Marie had a room near Susanne's put in readiness for Isabella, and informed her of Klaus's plans in reference to his wedding, — plans with which she expressed neither dissatisfaction nor pleasure. It was decided that the trousseau should be prepared immediately after the harvest festivities. Isabella busied herself with her lace cushion, and already her skilful fingers began to fashion a graceful web of exceeding fineness and beauty. "For the bridal robe," she whispered softly to me.

A great change had come over Susanne, who shunned all society; not only ours, but also Isabella's. Her faithful attendant, however, displayed not the slightest concern, though her darling spent half her time wandering in the garden or roaming through the woods, did not even seem worried at her pale countenance and loss of appetite, and showed no trace of anxiety when she some-



times suddenly started from her absent-mindedness and looked around with a terrified expression. "It is always so when one's in love," she said, apologetically and with a significant smile, when I seemed worried about the girl's appearance.

A few days later brought a letter from Klaus, which I had the pleasure of carrying upstairs and handing to Susanne. The first love letter; what an epoch in a maiden's life! With what fast-beating heart it is opened and eagerly perused in some secret corner, read, kissed a hundred times, and carefully guarded! Yes, even after the lapse of years, there rises from those sacred pages, yellowed with age, a fragrance as of roses; a flush suffuses the wrinkled visage, and the dimmed eyes again sparkle at the recollection of the hour which brought those tender lines. Even to me it was almost a solemn event; what might not be concealed within that blue envelope? So much love, such implicit trust, such fond, noble thoughts as could come only from Klaus. And it all fell into this fortunate little waif's cup of happiness, like a shower of gold from fairyland.

Opening the door, I looked in. Isabella sat by the open window, busy at her lace, and Susanne reclined dreamily upon the sofa. A broad stream of sunshine shone through the almost leafless branches into the room, and danced upon the tessellated floor, while Susanne's little kitten, with a bow of blue ribbon encircling its neck, sprung merrily from place to place, vainly endeavoring to catch the bright, flitting rays.

“Susanne,” I called, stepping to the sofa, “here is a letter from Klaus.”

Starting up she looked at me with a frightened expression, but instead of seizing the letter with the eagerness I had anticipated, only waved me back with her little hand. Isabella, on the contrary, appeared beside me as if conjured there. “A letter from your lover, Susanne,” she cried encouragingly, “come, now, my dear, don’t be so bashful about it; hurry up and read it.” There was a severity in her tones which seemed unnatural, and Susanne, seizing the epistle, picked up her straw hat and rushed from the room; but hers was not the haste of joyful expectancy, rather that of hurried flight from Isabella’s frowning look.

“A remarkable child, Fräulein Rosamunde,” continued the old woman smiling and bobbing her head. “She is different from ordinary beings, God bless her!” Then after rummaging in Susanne’s bureau-drawer she took out a gilt-edged sheet of paper in the upper corner of which, upon a flowering rosebush, was perched a tiny humming bird with outstretched wings; beside this she placed a blotter, inkstand, and pen. “She will want to answer as soon as she has read it,” she explained, “and it’s no easy task to reply to a first epistle of this kind; one has to begin it a dozen times, and even then, it is never satisfactory.”

I left her, saying to myself, “‘Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,’ and I should think Susanne would know what she wishes to write.”

This was a busy season for Anna Marie, who had to superintend various preparations for the festival. In all the outbuildings sounded the cheery buzz of life and activity, and Marieken had, as usual, been called in to assist. I found my niece in the pantry, sitting on a big chest filled with sugar, her slate in hand, and at her feet the scales, with their different weights. Mrs. Brockelmann, having sifted flour into the large trough in the bakehouse, had just come for the vessels of raisins and sugar already prepared and measured for the cakes. Anna Marie wore over her simple dress the conventional white apron, her fair hair was parted, and luxuriant braids encircled her shapely head, while her white arms gleamed beneath her sleeves, partially drawn up for work. Everything was noticeably fresh and clean, from the dainty mull kerchief around her shoulders to her neatly slippered feet. Would Susanne ever manage her household affairs with half of my niece's prudence and skill?

Never! never! This whip-poor-will, this little princess with the curly locks and childish hands! Would Anna Marie always remain at Bütze? Lost in meditation, I stood for a moment in the arched doorway. My niece figured her accounts, laid aside the slate, and reached eagerly for a letter. "From Klaus," she said, as she noticed me, "I will read it when I go to my own room." In the little basket of keys lay another epistle much smaller than this, and already opened. Catching a glimpse of it I turned toward my niece with an inquiring look.

“Stürmer writes me that he hopes to be present at our harvest festival,” she explained, quickly stooping to arrange something on the table, that I might not notice her blushing cheeks.

“Well, I suppose you have no objection?”

“No, certainly not,” she responded softly, “I am sure it is just what my brother would wish.”

“Did you know that Klaus had written to Susanne?”

With a slight, yet noticeable twitch she replied, “No, but it is what we must expect now.”

“She has run away with her treasure, it’s hard to say where,” I continued, smiling, “she will probably answer it to-day.”

Anna Marie nodded and suggested to go upstairs, adding, “I’d like to read mine also.” Passing through the bustling activity of the kitchen, we ascended the staircase, and Anna Marie proceeded directly to her own chamber, while I sought the solitude of my little room on the upper story. Pausing a moment in the hall, I heard Susanne moaning and the old woman’s angry voice exclaiming, —

“You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Susanne.”

“No, I cannot; I will not,” sobbed the girl.

Seeing they had neglected to close the door, I approached nearer, but could not understand the words which Isabella whispered in hissing tones.

“No, no,” Susanne again cried, but seemingly in a much more passive voice, and once more there was a suppressed whisper, followed by a kiss. Then in genuine Berliu

patois I heard, "All may come right yet, my precious treasure, my own Susie. Come, that's a good girl; for the present, put on a brave face and bear up with good grace."

A chill crept over me and touched my very heart. I could not account for it. What was wrong? At that moment I lacked courage to open their door, and stepped into my own chamber with the consciousness that something improper was taking place there, some mischief was being concocted in that room.

An hour later Isabella came to me and said, proudly, —  
"Here is the letter, gnädiges Fräulein; Susanne is very quick with her pen; she inherits that from her father; oh it is a beautiful letter, it's a pity you didn't read it; how pleased Klaus will be!"

"Herr von Hegewitz," I corrected, a little sharply.

"Pardon," returned Isabella, "I hear the name so often from Susanne that I forget myself."

"Very well," I interrupted, "but to return to the letter, do you mean to say that you know what is in it? I hope Susanne does not conduct her correspondence under your direction."

Isabella Pfannenschmidt's cheeks grew scarlet. "Mercy on us!" she cried, casting an angry glance at me. "Susanne merely told me what she intended to write; how she wanted to tell him of her gratitude and her great love for him."

"I do not wish to know the contents," I replied, coolly, "I only hope that Susanne will consider what

she has to say to her betrothed too sacred to repeat — to me it seems holy as a prayer — and that she will never desecrate her letters by allowing a stranger's eye to rest upon them."

Isabella smiled, embarrassed. Evidently, she had failed to understand me.

"To whom shall I give this letter?" she queried. "I should like it to go to the office as soon as possible."

"Leave it here and I will attend to that," I responded. When a little later I went downstairs, I saw Susanne sitting on a bench in the garden, apparently deeply absorbed in a book; her first letter was already on its way.

Anna Marie had controlled herself much better than I supposed possible; some powerful influence seemed to assist her to overcome her grief at her brother's proposed *mésalliance*. But before supper she brought me his letter; it contained a warm expression of his thanks to his sister, and assurances of his unchanged love for her; the whole epistle was pervaded by a tone of ecstatic delight, inspired by the thought that he had won Susanne. The world appeared more beautiful than ever; in roseate hues he painted the future with Susanne, with Anna Marie; again and again he asked, "How can I ever thank you sufficiently for loving my dear Susanne and receiving her as a sister? I always felt that we were unusually devoted to each other, and I am sure my love for you is even deeper than before. How I hope that a similar happiness is in store for you!" He added

that he was waiting eagerly as a child for the first letter from his betrothed, and that he was longing to get home but unfortunately business detained his return.

Silently my niece folded the epistle which I had handed back to her, and placed it in her pocket.

“Have you seen Susanne since she received her letter?” she asked.

“No.”

“I suppose she is very happy?”

“I think she is very undemonstrative about it,” I replied.

“Yes,” she assented, “but I cannot tell you how much better such conduct pleases me; it is a relief to me that she does not treat the matter with her usual levity.”



## CHAPTER XIV.

THE harvest festivities at Bütze were celebrated far more quietly than usual this year, although there had been no lack of the customary preparations. The platform for dancing was erected under four large oaks near the garden wall. The trees were garlanded with bright wreaths, and the whole yard swept as clean as a room, while the air was redolent with green pines and fresh cakes.

It was a glorious October day. True, a slight frost had covered the roofs in the early morn, but it soon vanished beneath the rays of the rising sun. Every one was astir bright and early. The village children, in their picturesque red flannel skirts and shining white waists, were the first to arrive to receive their cakes from the housekeeper. In the kitchen three girls, under Marieken's superintendence, were slicing potatoes for the salad, a whole wash-kettle full, and the aroma from the hissing, sputtering roasts was a good appetizer to the fast assembling crowd.

When I came downstairs, Anna Marie, who was waiting for me in the hall, asked, "Is Susanne coming?" At that moment I heard the sound of footsteps behind me, and turning saw Isabella. She came to excuse the child and say that she was too much fatigued to attend the morning service.

Anna Marie knit her brows. It was a time-honored custom in Bütze for every member of the family to be present on such occasions. "Is it absolutely impossible for her to go?" she queried.

"Yes," declared Isabella, and so we started alone. The bells sounded unusually solemn. The sun shone brightly through the windows of the little church, resting upon the wreaths on the altar, and lighting up the happy faces of the congregation. Reverently, the minister called upon his flock to unite with him in thanking their Heavenly Father for his many kindnesses, especially for the bountiful harvest of the present season. Then with a heart overflowing with gratitude, he poured forth words of thanksgiving and praise, and entreated the Lord of the harvest to bless the seed sown in the hearts of his people and cause it to bring forth a hundredfold. Earnestly, he referred to the final day of reckoning, to the heavenly ingathering, and reminded them of the happiness awaiting those who should bring forth fruits to the praise of His honor and glory. He admonished the men to diligence in business, the women to meekness and gentleness in their homes, and closed with a fervent supplication for the absent lord of the manor. Devoutly, Anna Marie lowered her head; I saw tears drop upon her hymnal, and I well knew how from the depths of her heart she joined in that prayer for Klaus.

It was necessary for us to hasten home, for immediately after the services the people brought the harvest-

wreath, which Anna Marie must to-day receive in her brother's stead. She cast a fleeting glance at the baron's pew but it was unoccupied; perhaps he was already waiting at the house. Through the greeting multitude we wended our way with all the speed my lame foot would permit, and Anna Marie hastily laid aside her hat and shawl, for we already heard music in the village street.

"I cannot account for it, aunt," she said, "but I dread being without Klaus to-day; it would be a relief if Stürmer were only here."

"The baron has been in the garden at least an hour," chimed in Marieken, as she unexpectedly appeared in her brand new suit, to inform us the people were coming.

"Go and find him, Marieken," I said, "and I will call Susanne and Isabella."

"There he comes now," was her quick response, as she looked out of the window and hastily opened the door leading to the verandah.

I could scarcely believe my eyes, but truly he was coming up the garden and beside him — Susanne. With airy, fairy steps she glided along, as if wafted by the strains of music borne to us on the warm breeze. She wore a dress of a delicate pink tint, and her cheeks and lips were of a corresponding hue. With outstretched arms she flew up the steps.

"Oh, Anna Marie! Oh, Fräulein Rosamunde! listen, do you hear it?" she cried, in ecstasy.

Stürmer followed, smiling, and offered his arm to

Anna Marie, who, with a long look at the enthusiastic child, accepted it. Susanne gazed after them in astonishment, then walked on quietly beside me.

In joyful expectancy the people had already gathered in front of the house. The children came skipping and dancing through the gateway, followed by the musicians. In the long procession, high above every other object, towered the garland of golden wheat, tied with gay ribbons that fluttered in the autumn breeze. Anna Marie stood on the front steps next to Stürmer. Her hand still rested lightly on his arm. She wore her blue dress and white lace kerchief. A sad smile hovered about her mouth as the speaker, followed by the two maidens carrying the wreath, ascended the steps. Motioning for silence, he commenced the familiar words, —

“ God be praised for all his blessings,  
For the sunshine and the rain;  
For the never-failing mercies  
He has shown this year again.”

The trumpet's clear shrill tones accompanied the loud, hearty cheers of the people; two beautiful girls laid a garland of flowers at the feet of Anna Marie, who, responding to the words of presentation by a friendly shake of the hand, said, in her deep alto voice, “I thank you heartily, my friends, in the name of my brother, who deeply regrets his inability to be present to-day. I thank you for your honest, industrious work of the past year, and sincerely hope that nothing may ever occur to mar the friendly relations which from time immemorial

have existed between the master and people of Bütze. And now, in the name of my brother, I ask you to enjoy yourselves, to be contented, light-hearted, and merry, as befits this festive occasion."

"Hurrah! hurrah! for our gnädiges Fräulein," rose the jubilant shouts of the crowd, as the boys tossed their caps high in the air, and the people, marching to the strains of the music, proceeded to the large barn where the long tables were spread with a bountiful harvest dinner.

Anna Marie then released Stürmer's arm, and stepped up to offer her greetings to the people. He appeared unusually affected, but I noticed a faint, peculiar smile playing over his features, and remembered how he had once told me he thought nothing more unbecoming in a woman than for her, even for a moment, to step from her own into a man's sphere, and I could not but feel that he would think speechmaking lay outside of woman's province.

While Anna Marie was talking, I looked around for Susanne, but she had disappeared. There was no time to-day for wondering and speculating as to where she had gone. My niece was now making the rounds of the tables, responding to each and all, as they drank her health. Baron Stürmer accompanied her, and it was a beautiful sight to see them stepping about the grounds, arm in arm.

Nothing escaped my notice that day, and even at this hour I can recall precisely what this and that one did;

of course, however, it was not until the excitement had subsided, and I had time and leisure for reflection, that I could arrange events in the order of their occurrence. Susanne's pink dress, so remarkably becoming to her clear, transparent complexion, awakened within me no surprise; indeed, the merry confusion of the bustling crowd rendered me oblivious to the fact that she was still in deep mourning for her father; neither did I remember that, though only this morning she had pleaded ill-health as an excuse for remaining from church, she was now with blooming cheeks and sparkling eyes participating in all the festivities. I thought it nothing remarkable that when we surrounded the festive board, she was the gayest of the gay, her exuberant spirits fairly overflowing, and her ringing laughter again and again echoing through the old barn. The harvest table to-day was encircled by all the Bütze gentry, retainers, and servants. Only Klaus was absent.

Pastor Grüne, also, and his sister, graced our entertainment by their presence. He occupied the seat of honor near Anna Marie, who presided at the head of the table; at her right was Susanne, and beside her Edwin Stürmer, while I was next to the pastor. I saw my niece cast many an earnest glance at Susanne, yet I could not but notice the pleasure, the delight that gleamed from her eyes, as they rested upon the dainty little rosebud of a maiden, whose dimples seemed brimful of mischief, whose dark orbs danced, and whose rosy lips, parting, as the trifling, bewitching nonsense



poured from her mouth, displayed the pearly white teeth. Isabella's countenance was radiant with pride, as, looking from one guest to another, she found her darling the cynosure of all eyes.

Stürmer rose, and proposed the health of the absent master, his dearest friend, the proprietor of that house dear to him as his own home.

A roseate glow enhanced the beauty of Anna Marie's face, as she rose to touch his glass, but Susanne trembled and placed hers without any response on the table; she had grown pale, quiet, almost speechless.

Pastor Grüne suggested, with a well-filled glass in his hand, the health of the fair young hostess, the mistress of Bütze, as he called Anna Marie. The old man's voice trembled with emotion, as he said that despite her youth she was ever earnest and thoughtful, a veritable Martha, never neglecting her domestic cares and responsibilities. With deep respect, Anna Marie listened to his kind, fatherly words, then, raising her glass, the crowd pressed forward to respond to her health; Stürmer came last, but she did not raise her eyes, even, as they touched glasses. With a look of astonishment, Susanne fastened her gaze upon Anna Marie; perhaps she had never before realized that there was anything worthy of praise in the simple performance of household duties. I noticed her suddenly tremble, as if some unpleasant impression had been produced upon her.

Then through the wide-opened casements sounded the jubilant voices of the people, announcing that the dan-



eing had begun, and calling for the presence of master and mistress. My niece rose, as a signal that dinner was over, and motioned for Susanne; we older folks remained behind, merrily chatting about this, or surmising about that; my old friend, Miss Grüne, said she could not resist the temptation to wait for the afternoon coffee; the pastor lighted his pipe, and, dreamily reclining in an easy chair, was soon enveloped in the wreathing clouds of bluish white smoke. For many years we had been friends, innumerable joys and sorrows had cemented the bond uniting our hearts, — surely, we were at no loss for conversation.

Unable to content myself longer here (for there is nothing I enjoy more than watching happy youths and maidens participate in a general dance), I suggested, “Let us go out under the oaks.” Mamselle Grüne preferred napping in my quiet chamber, assuring me, however, she would soon follow. So Pastor Grüne escorted me downstairs. As we neared the crowd thronging the dancers, I saw my niece whirling in the giddy waltz with the Oberknecht (head manservant), while Stürmer was leading out the Grossmagd (the principle servant girl). To-day, each and all claimed the privilege of having the master and mistress at least once for his or her partner. But where was Susanne?

Wending my way round the living wall of men, women, and children, I reached the spot under the oaks reserved for the lords and ladies of the manor, from which the masses remained at respectful distance. Here I

found the child, her arms thrown round the gnarled bole of an old linden, her large eyes fastened on the merry couples leading in the dance, her features quivering, her breast heaving, and tears on her long lashes.

“I wish I could dance too,” she sobbed, passionately, as I approached, “if only for one time.”

Already Stürmer, forcing his way through the crowd, was hastening to her. He extended no formal invitation to dance, and forgot all ceremonious etiquette; beseechingly she stretched out her arms towards him, and I thought he almost carried her through the whirl, then embraced her—I do not yet know whether it was my imagination, or whether he really did press her so close to himself that her feet barely touched the ground. I listened as in a dream while the good old pastor spoke of Titania; I saw naught save the unceasing gyrations of their graceful figures, the fluttering folds of her pink dress, and the shining rose entwined among her raven tresses, heard naught save the entrancing melody of the waltz. Through the waving branches of the majestic old oaks, the sun shed upon them a stream of golden light, lovingly bathing them in his glory? Yes, even now, the picture rises vividly before me.

There she stood, leaning upon his arm, a happy smile illumining her countenance—was this real or only some idle fancy? Yonder too stood Anna Marie, so quiet and calm that one could scarcely believe she had just been taking part in the swift motions of the waltz. Perhaps it was foolish, but I really felt annoyed that

Susanne exhibited no sign of grief for the absence of her lover, and that there seemed no undercurrent of sadness in the flow of her exuberant spirits. I may have been a little severe, she was so young, and after all with whom was she dancing? Was it not with Edwin Stürmer, Klaus's dearest friend? could there be anything improper in that, when such a perfect understanding existed between herself and her betrothed?

No further time was afforded me for reflection, for at that moment the melodious strains of the dance were interrupted by the shrill tones of the postilion's horn, a yellow stage halted before the door, and a familiar form sprang out.

"Klaus! Klaus!" I cried, instinctively starting to run to him, but pausing as I thought of Susanne; he had come for her sake, and their first meeting must not be in the presence of such a multitude. Hastily I turned to find the child and lead her through the park to the house.

She lay as lifeless in Isabella's arms, and between the old woman's sobs and moans I caught the disjointed words, "Dancing — foolishness — never could endure such violent exercise."

Anna Marie bent over her, pale with fright. "How unfortunate that it should happen just at this moment," she whispered, "go to Klaus or I — no, it is best for you to go."

With all possible speed I hastened across the garden and met him in the vestibule; his handsome face

was radiant with joy as he clasped me in a fond embrace.

“They are under the oaks, are they not?” he asked, “I tried to be in time for dinner, but these stage horses, slow-going creatures at best, were slower than ever and moved along at a snail’s pace.” Then he kissed my hand and stammered, “Is she not — Susanne — is she?” —

“No, Klaus, they have gone inside for a little, come into your own room and wait a moment, your sister will be here presently. Susanne is not well to-day, and I think it would be better to let them know that you are here, the surprise” —

I motioned him into the sitting-room just as Stürmer stepped through the summer parlor. A terrified expression had stolen over my nephew’s features, but the question died upon his lips as his friend heartily grasped his hand and turning to me inquired, “What is wrong with Fräulein Mattoni? Was it really the dancing? Just think, Klaus, a few minutes ago she was rosy and happy, but the moment she saw you drive into the grounds she grew pale and dizzy, and before I could imagine what was coming next, her old duenna had caught her in her arms, exclaiming, ‘This is what comes of dancing!’ — Do *you* think such a thing could be possible?”

“Certainly,” I endeavored to explain, “Susanne is very delicate and the dizzy whirling” — I paused, Klaus manifested so much anxiety that I feared he would betray his secret on the spot.

“Dear Edwin,” I asked, “will you be kind enough to take our place for a few moments and entertain our guests till we return? Pastor Grüne is sitting alone on the bench, you see, and you know he is very sensitive. Klaus, if you will excuse me, I will go and ascertain how things are progressing upstairs, and send Mrs. Brockelmann with something to appease your hunger.” I do not know whether Edwin Stürmer especially relished my request or not, I can only say that with the most gallant politeness he at once consented to do as I desired.

On the staircase I encountered Anna Marie.

“Where is he?” she asked hurriedly, without stopping even for a moment, but calling back as she passed on, “Susanne will be better before long, she is perfectly conscious now.” Her blue dress rustled behind the brown baluster, and I heard naught save, “Klaus, dear Klaus!” — and the door closed.

Susanne lay upon her bed; they had removed her dress and thrown a shawl loosely round her shoulders, her hands were pressed against her temples. Isabella crouched before her, holding a bottle of some restorative as she tenderly stroked her darling’s cheek and whispered eagerly in her ear. As she saw me she rose.

“How unfortunate, gnädiges Fräulein,” she remarked, “that the child should faint at such a time as this, in the midst of all the gayety and rejoicing, but it’s always so when children will not do as they are told. Susanne,

my treasure, are you better? Haven't I told you hundreds of times you must not dance, and what pleasure was there in whirling round among those rough, uncouth villagers? — oh, how strong this smells — but you were self-willed as usual; just wait till I tell your intended, he will see that you obey orders — yes — youth” —

Susanne responded with a look expressive of almost every sensation save love and respect.

“Hurry up, hurry up, and get well again, Susie,” she urged, pitilessly, “surely, you do not think this is a pleasant reception for Herr von Hegewitz.”

The girl gave a nervous start, and folding her hands begged, “Please do be quiet. My head swims and I feel so sick.”

“Lie still then, my dear,” I said soothingly, “perhaps you will be better by evening and Klaus can easily wait. Shall I tell him in the meantime you are glad he has come?”

Sinking back on the pillow, she turned her face and nodded assent. “Let her sleep,” I said to Isabella, “she is very much exhausted.”

Shrugging her shoulders, the old woman whispered, “I can do nothing, it is very unfortunate, but I am sure she will be better soon. It's only her nerves, that's all.”

Anna Marie and Klaus had just passed down the front steps and were proceeding in the direction of the dancers; his arm was thrown lovingly round his sister, but his face wore a troubled expression and there were traces of tears in my niece's eyes.



"She will be able to see you to-day, yet, I think Klaus," I said consolingly. He pressed my hand and sighed.

"He is going to leave to-morrow morning, aunt; he only came on her account," said Anna Marie in a friendly tone, looking up at him with a pleasant smile.

"Yes indeed," responded Klaus, "affairs there are in such a terribly intricate condition that I should not have left, but I was so anxious to see how — it seems too bad to pass the whole time of one's engagement without having personally settled matters with one's betrothed. Letters are so conventional and unsatisfactory, at least, to me. Don't you agree with me, aunt? And now I'm specially glad that I did run off if only for a day, for Susanne's health seems to be still in a critical condition. I will speak to the doctor again," he continued, with a careworn look, "and immediately after our wedding will start for the south."

"Poor Klaus! it is a sad reception," said Anna Marie, "I cannot understand myself how it happened, she was so cheerful and gay" —

"You must never allow her to dance," he interrupted, reprovingly.

"But the little witch was waltzing around before we could prevent it," I rejoined, jocosely.

"And Stürmer dances so wildly," supplemented Klaus.

We had now arrived at the platform, where a motley crowd moved hither and thither, coming and going in all



directions. Stürmer, annoyed and somewhat dejected, stood with folded arms supporting himself against an oak. Suddenly discovering the presence of their master, the people rushed forward to welcome him, giving vent to their joy in boisterous hilarity. Klaus wished to withdraw after addressing a few words to them, but the demonstratively expressed wishes of his retainers and friends rendered it impossible. Then, with a bitter-sweet expression, yielding to the time-honored custom, he led out the buxom head-maid, who blushed with joy and embarrassment at the thought of having such a distinguished partner.

Anna Marie had seated herself on a bench under the trees, and a happy smile broke the stillness of her face as she looked up at Edwin who now stood before her. The departing sun encircled her fair head with a halo of glory, and tinged her cheeks with the warm hue of life and hope.

She was charming in her youthful beauty, and Stürmer gazed down upon her with appreciative eyes. As I watched the two awhile, a variety of possibilities, some well-nigh impossible, flitted through my mind. What castles does one not build 'neath the blue unclouded heavens, bathed in a flood of sunshine and listening to the merry strains of some familiar melody!

The twilight shadows had lengthened when Isabella stepped into my room to announce that Susanne was ready to see Klaus, and to ask if she could receive him here. I joyfully assented, and she left to return in a

moment accompanied by the white-robed, airy form of Susanne, who entered and unsteadily leaned against the large oaken cupboard near the door. Isabella sailed out, remarking she would tell Herr von Hegewitz that his lady-love was waiting to receive him.

Timidly, Susanne stepped to the centre of the room. I hastened to make a light, but in trembling tones she begged me not to do so. Hearing Klaus's hasty footsteps approaching I started for the adjoining apartment. Susanne advanced as if to detain me, but nothing in the world could have induced me to remain and deprive my nephew of the rapturous delight of being alone with his beloved for that brief quarter of an hour. Why should another hear the secrets sacred to these two? Why should other ears listen to the outpouring of love of these two beings who now belonged to each other, whom naught save death was to separate? I withdrew and while closing the door caught the sound of a man's deep pathetic voice, breathing the one word, "Susanne!"

I stood by the open window and looked over the moonlit grounds. Within, all was quiet; Edwin Stürmer, with his usual tact, had left before the evening repast, thinking doubtless that as Klaus was to be with us such a short time, we should prefer being alone. Pastor Grüne and his sister had also taken an early departure. Isabella had interrupted Klaus in a confidential chat with his sister, to announce that Susanne was waiting for him; yonder under the oaks, by the gay light of the colored lanterns, the people were still dan-

cing; strains of music fell upon my ear, interrupted occasionally by a loud huzza, and now and again by the blithe voice of some happy maiden warbling a sprightly melody; the air was mild and balmy as on a spring evening.

What will Anna Marie do now? I pondered. The seconds grew into minutes, the minutes stretched themselves into quarter and the quarter into half hours, and ere I was aware, seven clear strokes from the old timepiece proclaimed a farewell to the departed day and a welcome to the new-born night. I sprang up — old Aunt Rosamunde had not yet forgotten the duties of etiquette. As I opened the door and stepped into my room, I saw the two leaning against the oaken casement, his arm was thrown fondly round her, and, bending low over her winsome form I heard his impassioned entreaty, —

“Now, speak one word, darling, tell me you love me truly and sincerely, as I love you.”

The full moon shed a soft, subdued light upon the girlish figure and enabled me to see her arm slowly slip from his shoulder. Without, the gayety had subsided and for a moment all was quiet; presently the plaintive tones of a youthful voice broke the stillness, and in our ears sounded the familiar strain, —

“I thought I surely loved thee  
Till I another met;  
Farewell — to-day first taught me  
What love is — I regret ” —

Susanne's arm now dropped by her side. Once again I noticed Klaus whisper more gently, more beseechingly than before, and heard Susanne in a quick, suffocated voice responded, "Yes." Then with a loving caress he kissed her again and again.

The next day sped by with winged swiftness; even yet I cannot account for the rapidity of its flight. Perhaps it was partly because so much of importance transpired, that so many matters were discussed, and so many arrangements completed.

Klaus had consulted with Isabella about the wedding, and they had mutually agreed that the happy event should take place on the twenty-second of November. When Isabella came out of his room she had a new silk dress on her arm, but despite her unexpected gift, her face wore a disappointed, somewhat dissatisfied expression, for he had informed her that after the nuptials she could remain here no longer, that he had rented a small, comfortable dwelling in Berlin for her, and would furnish her with a liberal annual allowance. It was through Anna Marie's influence that he had resolved upon this step, although he himself did not consider the old woman as a valuable or even desirable part of his wife's dowry. As she passed out, she darted a withering look at Anna Marie, to whom she felt confident she was indebted for this distasteful arrangement.

On Susanne's hand now sparkled a diamond of unusual lustre, and Klaus was ever at her side; often I saw them strolling up and down the garden path, and once

the refrain of her rippling laugh fell upon my ear, although it broke off suddenly in one of its sweetest cadences. She had little to say, but accepted her lover's fond attentions and devotion with the calm composure of a queen receiving her subject's homage.

What ineffable happiness gleamed from the countenance of my dear old Klaus! What careful consideration he displayed for the little maiden on whom he had bestowed his heart! With the fond anxiety of a mother he wrapped her shawls and coverings around her, as she sat upon the verandah in the warmth of the midday sun. Almost every sentence he uttered commenced, "Susanne, would you like to have it done this way?" and ended, "Darling, if you prefer it, of course it shall be just so."

Anna Marie devoted much of her time to outside duties. Was it really necessary, or did it grieve her to see the two so constantly together? Was there a tinge of jealousy aroused by the feeling that Susanne had usurped her place? One fact at least was certain, she allowed me, almost unassisted, to perform the wearisome duties of a chaperone.

This evening Klaus must again leave us; hastily, the hours flew by; he grew more quiet, more tender and devoted than ever, as the moment of separation approached. After supper we went into the summer parlor and seated ourselves round the cheerful lamp. All was in readiness, travelling cloak and robes lay for convenience on one of the chairs near by. Susanne had

gone to her room for a moment, while Anna Marie had stepped into the kitchen to prepare a glass of hot wine for her brother, for the weather had grown colder. Klaus held in his hand a bow which he had taken from Susanne's hair.

"Aunt Rosamunde," he said abruptly, looking down into my face, "Stürmer is a very frequent visitor here nowadays, is he not?"

"Yes, Klaus, he comes quite often."

"I wonder if he is willing to risk another pair of horses for the sake of playing whist with you?" he asked, jocosely.

"I am unable to say, Klaus."

He stepped nearer. "If it was so, aunt," he added softly, "do you believe my sister would again" —

"No, Klaus, if I understand her aright, she still loves Stürmer."

"*Still* loves him, aunt, — you mean she loves him now."

I knew not how to reply.

"Oh, I should be so happy," he began anew, "if Anna Marie and Edwin" —

Suddenly he paused, for Susanne had returned, but with such a light, airy step that we had been unconscious of her presence till we saw her standing in the middle of the room. As she slowly advanced nearer, I noticed her pale face and quiet demeanor, but attributed it to sadness at the thought of parting. When Klaus at bidding her farewell clasped her tightly to his breast, she looked up into his noble, agitated countenance, and



then raising herself on tiptoe, laid her arm for one moment round his neck, but to all his fond, loving words she made not a single response.

She remained beside me on the front steps and watched him, as, robed in his large mantle, he entered the carriage. Anna Marie went down with him, and with her own hands laid the covers and fur bags for his feet on the seat beside him. Brother and sister clasped hands warmly, but Klaus's glance wandered past Anna Marie to the dainty little maiden, whose motionless figure he could still see by the fitful glare of the lantern. In blank surprise Mrs. Brockelmann looked at Susanne, who manifested little or no emotion, but coolly waved farewell. As the horses trotted briskly down the gravelled drive, Klaus leaned out of the window, eager to catch a last glimpse of his beloved; then the vehicle rolled through the gate out into the darkness beyond.

Without waiting for Anna Marie, Susanne rushed into the house as if some one were in hot pursuit, and we heard the pattering of her footsteps as she flew up the stairs.

Anna Marie and I went back into the parlor, but neither of us spoke. I laid my knitting and glasses in my work basket, but she stood in dreamy contemplation in the middle of the room. Suddenly she started towards me, then hurriedly stooped down and, as she rose, I noticed her cheeks were colorless, and that she held in her hands something small and shining—Susanne's engagement ring.



Without speaking she laid it on the table, and seating herself, waited for Susanne, who she felt sure would soon miss her treasure and anxiously hurry down to look for it.

Anna Marie nervously fingered the leaves of one of Scott's novels, and her eyes lingered long on some of the pages, although evidently she was not reading. I had resumed my knitting. At last, laying down the book, she said, "We had better retire, had we not, Aunt Rosamunde. Will you be kind enough to hand the ring to Susanne?"

I took the precious little love pledge and tried to excuse the child by remarking, "It is much too large for her."

"Yes," rejoined Anna Marie ironically, "it does not fit her." Then with a significant look at me she left the room.

## CHAPTER XV.

It appeared as if autumn had delayed the assumption of his regal rights and allowed summer to prolong her reign for the special benefit of the harvest festivities in Bütze. But now as if to redeem lost time, he came in all his glory, announcing his arrival by gusts of wind, and pelting rains, and touches of frost that destroyed or changed the appearance of everything that reminded him of summer. Every green leaf he tinged with his favorite hues of gold and crimson; the garden was fairly aglow with brilliancy; rich clusters of purple grapes drooped heavily from the fruitful vines, and in the mornings a dense gray cloud of mist overspread the entire landscape. The stork's nest on the barn roof was deserted, and great flocks of wild geese flew screeching over the village, arousing in my mind thoughts of the dreary, monotonous winter my niece and I must spend alone.

Anna Marie indulged in no idle dreaming, but resorted to work, incessant work, as the best preventive of worry and useless regret. Occasionally, she would stand in the gloaming, gazing pensively beyond the Bütze possessions, and listening to the measured sound of the threshing-machine issuing from the not far distant barn, then, as if to atone for lost time, she would hastily make a light

and resume her work, to which there seemed no end, for she was already deep in the mysteries of Susanne's trousseau.

She had kindly led the child to the massive old linen chest, and with the pride of a housekeeper of the good old times, displayed to her the great piles of snowy white linen, pointed out those she herself had spun, and finally spread before her that in which her own heart took such delight — the damasks in whose fine threads the Hegewitz escutcheon was skilfully interwoven. Susanne stood beside her and viewed it all with astonished rather than admiring gaze. She could not comprehend how any one could ever begin to use such immense quantities of linen; it seemed to her, she said, that they would last for hundreds of years. Neither did they call forth much praise from Isabella, not being sufficiently fine and dainty for her fastidious eye. "Too coarse, too coarse, mademoiselle," she said, rubbing her finger over the linen for Susanne's underwear, on which three seamstresses were already at work, "it is thick enough to last forever; it is so harsh it would hurt the child's tender skin."

Susanne manifested much more interest in the samples of dress goods which Klaus forwarded from Berlin. With genuine delight her little hands fingered over and over the gay pieces. She ran from Anne Marie to Isabella, then from Isabella to me, excitedly querying, "Do you prefer the satin or the *moire*? which do you admire more, the brocade or the *gros-grain*?" And every even-

ing, unfailing as the twilight itself, through the autumn darkness, despite wind and weather, came Edwin Stürmer.

As formerly, he stepped into the room; and inquired for the health of the ladies; as formerly, when he rose to leave, my niece, in her friendly way, invited him to spend the evening; as formerly, he accepted, laid down his hat and whip, remained for supper, and afterwards made one of our party at the whist table; all as formerly, — yet how different!

Susanne was a superficial, unskilful player, throwing her cards at haphazard, heedless of their value, and regardless of the real object of the game, while my niece, who always delved down to the foundation, played with characteristic earnestness.

“But, Susanne, pay attention, you are helping your enemy,” she would sometimes chide; or, “Please, Susanne, do not look at Aunt Rosamunde’s cards, no one should do that.” It may have sounded rather absurd, when one looked at the rosy, smiling little being who, with such charming *nonchalance*, held the cards in her hands, every moment forgetting which was uppermost, so merrily laughing when she made a good play, and so heartily distressed when luck was against her. “*O est-il possible!*” she would then cry, shaking her head, “no trick!”

Baron Stürmer seemed possessed with the patience of an angel; untiringly he picked up Susanne’s fallen cards, laughing when she laughed, and sympathizingly contract-

ing his brows when Anna Marie expressed the least dissatisfaction. At times, when he was *her* partner, he seemed uneasy and absent-minded, she, timid, shy, and evidently embarrassed, and more than once theirs was the defeated side. "Bad luck in playing, good luck in love," chimed in good old Pastor Grüne, who dropped in one evening, and was seated behind my niece. She colored, and her hand trembled perceptibly. With his customary tact, Edwin was apparently deaf to the remark, but Susanne, with a fiery flash in her eyes, looked over at Anna Marie. According to agreement, her relation to Klaus was never referred to in the presence of any one not in the immediate family. Once I had asked if the baron should not be told of it, but Anna Marie insisted that Klaus did not wish it, and I remained silent.

Susanne rarely mentioned her absent lover, but with unfailing regularity Isabella deposited in the mail bag twice every week a reply to his frequent, homesick epistles. Already, her room was adorned with gifts and remembrances he had sent her from Breslau, — bisque figures, fans, bric-a-brac of every variety, and a multitude of useless little nicknacks, which I could never have brought myself to think of in connection with Anna Marie. A short time ago, Klaus himself had rather scorned such bawbles, and even now betrayed his former lack of interest in, and appreciation of them, by the selections he frequently made; more than once he was deluded into paying a fabulous price for an antiquated window decoration, palmed off upon him as

something new and valuable. Susanne's sense of the beautiful was developed to the highest degree, but that peculiar charm of women, which induces most of them, almost as an act of piety, to wear a lover's gift, simply because love's offering, was entirely lacking in her. Numerous indeed were the personal trinkets he sent her, which she never once deigned to wear. But lively enough were her demonstrations of joy when she came into possession of a fine old lace kerchief, which Anna Marie had discovered, in rummaging through the old family chests. Daintily she fastened it around her neck, and, before Stürmer's arrival in the evening, tucked gracefully in its yellow folds a bunch of red garden asters.

After every visit of Edwin Stürmer, Anna Marie grew more thoughtful, more taciturn; but an unmistakable look of inward happiness illumined her fair, girlish face. I was daily more and more reminded of that Anna Marie who, on a stormy spring day in years gone by, had stepped into my room, fallen upon my neck, and almost — would to God it had been altogether — confided to me the secret of her young heart. Indescribably charming she appeared in the dignity of her quiet bliss, in contrast with our betrothed little maiden, who, ever variable, now wildly laughed as one bewitched, and the next moment wept so piteously that a heart of stone could not but be touched. Yes, Susanne Mattoni laughed and cried like no other human being; she gave vent to all her emotions in a way peculiarly her own!

I now frequently saw my niece standing in the gray, misty twilight, under the old lindens, motionlessly gazing at the dark gable roofs of Dambitz, which towered above the trees. A spell had woven itself about her, and naught seemed able to break it save some of Susanne's incomprehensible sayings or doings, which reminded her unexpectedly of her dear Klaus. Then, in deep anxiety, she would look down upon the curious little creature of such mercurial temperament, and, hastily leaving her, would seek the solitude of her own chamber, not to reappear for hours.

Just three weeks before the day appointed for the bridal, I was returning towards evening from a visit to my old friend, Mamselle Grüne. It was a genuine autumn evening, damp and windy, precisely the kind I so much dreaded. Drawing my veil over my face, and wrapping my shawl more closely round me, I took the shortest cut over the churchyard through the garden. The old manor house reared its head gloomily above the tall forest trees; no cheerful light shone invitingly from any of its windows, but out of the tall chimney the smoke blew over the roof in long, sombre streaks, waving like symbols of mourning over our dear old home, and struggling with the wind as if loath to be so rent and torn asunder.

"Aha! so Anna Marie has had a fire lighted," I soliloquized, with a feeling of satisfaction, thinking of the cosy sitting-room, the warm beer soup, and our after-supper whist table. Just as I neared a narrow by-path, I



espied a dark figure sitting under the lindens. "Mercy, Anna Marie," I muttered, "and in such weather!" I paused a moment, intending to call her, for a fine rain was falling, and I feared she would take cold. Realizing, however, after a moment's reflection, that she would not like to be disturbed in her privacy, and that she would be grieved were any curious eye to discover her carefully guarded secret, I quickly slipped by, unnoticed.

Suddenly, I paused again, for close along the hedge came a horseman whom, despite the twilight gloom, I recognized as Edwin Stürmer. He raised his hat in friendly greeting, and my heart beat high with joyful alarm, for yonder among the grey foliage a white handkerchief waved in response. This little token fluttered in the fragrant evening air, till horse and rider had disappeared in the darkness of the grove beyond the bridge.

"Anna Marie! Is it possible!" I whispered in a half-audible tone, as I resumed my solitary walk—it sounded almost like a cry of rejoicing, but I could not help that; I felt God would yet bring light out of darkness and all would soon be right. I hurried up the stairs, intending to pen a few words to Klaus: "Anna Marie and Edwin are nearer and dearer to each other than you had dared to hope." How delighted he would be. But unfortunately, as so often happens, something interfered with the carrying out of my plans. In the vestibule I met Mrs. Brockelmann and at once instinct-

ively knew that, in spite of my joyful emotions, I should be compelled to listen to one of her tedious recitals, for she coaxed me into her neat little room. Yesterday a married niece of hers residing in the village, had quarrelled with her husband; the latter had endeavored to assert his lordship over his better half in a manner impressive, yet rather forcible. Good Mrs. Brockelmann who was beside herself with righteous indignation at the miserable fellow for daring to use a club to a woman, refused to let me depart till I had solemnly promised to read the despicable tyrant a good lecture. "Perhaps Anna Marie could do it better," she supplemented, "still, I hardly know; nowadays you might relate such a thing to her a dozen times, and at the end she would coolly ask, 'What did you say, Mrs. Brockelmann?' Dear, but I would like to find out where her thoughts really are!"

"Well," I replied, with a smile, "I will attend to it myself; send the ruffian to me to-morrow morning." She plodded along behind me through the corridor, scolding all the way and in the worst of humors because Fieken had neglected to light the hall-lamp.

As I entered my chamber, I dimly saw a form rising from a seat by the old-fashioned stove. "Anna Marie, are you here?" I queried, recognizing my niece.

Slowly she came forward. "Yes, my dear aunt, I have something to give you. Baron Stürmer was here, he wished to speak to you, I do not know about what, but," she added softly, with a choking voice, "he

asked me to hand you this note which he wrote very hastily."

Pressing the envelope in my hand she continued, "Here it is, please open it." Seating myself on a low chair by the fire I attempted to read it by the fitful glare of the burning wood, but the letters danced before my eyes in wild confusion. "We must call for a lamp," I said, "or what is better still, you read it to me, Anna Marie, it will be too long to wait for Mrs. Brockelmann."

Kneeling beside me the girl took it from my hands, whispering, "I wonder if I ought to know the contents."

"Of course, I give you permission, go on." Forthwith she commenced, —

"RESPECTED AND DEAR AUNT ROSAMUNDE, — I regret not finding you at home. Please expect me to-morrow afternoon about five o'clock. There is a subject I should like to talk over with you, a matter in regard to which I desire your advice. I have a wish, on the fulfilment of which depend my peace and happiness, the quiet rest of my heart. Do not mention it to Anna Marie. In haste, impatiently,

Your devoted

"EDWIN STÜRMER."

Anna Marie read it in broken snatches, then letting the paper slip from her fingers buried her head in my lap and threw her arms wildly around me, gasping, "Aunt, oh, Aunt Rose!"

"At last, at last," I sobbed, "all will be right yet." She offered no response, but rose and began to pace up and down the room with folded arms and drooped head.

I could not see her features in the deep evening gloom, but I knew she was greatly agitated. "Aunt," she said at last, advancing towards me, "what shall you tell Edwin Stürmer?"

"I will receive him as a friend, Anna Marie, of course."

"No, I mean to-morrow, to his question," she continued, tremulously.

"Whatever you wish, my dear girl. Shall I say yes?"

Slipping down she threw her arm round my neck. "Yes," she said softly, breaking into tears. The pent-up sorrow of years had at last found a vent, and poured from her soul. I lovingly stroked her smooth hair, but allowed her to weep undisturbed. How long we sat there I cannot say. The child at last rose, kissed my hand, and whispered, "I must go downstairs now."

"Yes," I advised, "you should rest a little, your head is hot and feverish. Tell Mrs. Brockelmann to make you a cup of tea. I am afraid you took cold in the damp garden."

Her hand was already on the knob of the door but she instantly turned and responded, "I was not in the garden, aunt. I have been here waiting for you half an hour, ever since he left," then with a pleasant nod she passed out and left me in veritable dismay.

Anna Marie had not been in the garden? Who in the world then had stood there waving that white handkerchief? A strange suspicion crept into my mind, and

almost intuitively I went across to Susanne's room. She was there, crouching on the floor before her bureau. The bright fire cast a rosy tint upon her girlish countenance, and her eyes sparkled with excitement. Her hands were clasped round her knees and she gazed pensively into the leaping flames. Isabella was busy in the other corner of the room but came nearer as she noticed me.

"Susanne," I asked, "have you just come up from the garden?"

As she rose I observed a look of alarm depicted in every feature of her face. "No," promptly replied Isabella, "Susie has not been out of the room this afternoon, what would take her out in such weather?"

"I thought, indeed I was certain, I saw you, Susanne."

Turning away her head she lowered her eyes, stammering in a choked voice, "No, I have not been downstairs."

I deigned no reply but retreated to my own chamber. Was my eyesight then growing so alarmingly poor? Close by the door my foot became entangled in something soft and light; I stooped and found Susanne's lace veil which she was accustomed to throw over her head, damp and heavy. Speechless, I laid it on the nearest chair. Why had Susanne lied? Why was she so terrified and embarrassed?

With lightning speed flashed through my brain a hateful, terrible thought which almost paralyzed me. But

no, it was not possible, it was a wicked delusion, how can one have such terrible fancies? I was angry with myself. With trembling hand I made a light and stepped to my secretary. Even to-day I cannot account for the answer I in that moment sent Edwin Stürmer. I wrote under the impulse of an inexplicable anxiety, and this is what I said, —

“MY DEAR EDWIN, — I shall be very glad to see you to-morrow at the appointed hour. I too have important news to communicate, which I am sure will make you glad. Can you realize that Klaus, our dear old Klaus, is engaged? Perhaps you have already surmised that the fair lady is none other than Susanne Mattoni. They have been betrothed for a long time, but we have not mentioned it outside the family. For old friendship’s sake, however, I now make an exception, and let you into our secret. With best and kindest wishes, I remain,      Your old friend,

“ROSAMUND VON HEGEWITZ.”

In great haste I folded the epistle, rang for the coachman and gave it to him. As I heard his horse prancing through the gate, I was seized with a nervous chill, and sent word to my niece that I did not feel well and could not be down to tea.

About eight o’clock I heard Susanne’s light step in the hall; she was coming from supper and was trilling a love song. Then her door closed and again all was silent.

Long after midnight I crept over to the hall window to see if Anna Marie had retired. No, she was still awake. On the garden beds lighted by the reflection of a lamp from her room, I saw her shadow, and knew that

she was restlessly pacing up and down. In deep anxiety I folded my hands and prayed, "Dear Lord, thou knowest what she has already suffered, spare her further misery in this moment of expected joy, make her happy, and grant that my fears may be groundless, increase my faith, and give my dear niece the happiness she deserves."

The morning dawned gray and gloomy. Anna Marie stood by the open window in the sitting-room, drinking in the air so unusually hot and stifling for a November day. In her hand was a crushed white rose. "See aunt," she said, reaching me the flower, "I found it early this morning on the rosebush on mother's grave. The last few days have been so cold — it is almost a miracle, it seems like a greeting for to-day." Then taking a glass she placed the unseasonable little bud carefully in fresh water and carried it to her room.

The noon mail brought two letters from Klaus, one for Susanne and one for Anna Marie, both relating to his necessarily protracted absence. "As I cannot say how long I shall be away with Susanne," he wrote, "and as in the short time I shall have to remain at home, I shall probably be unable to discuss these matters with you, I herewith give you a short memorandum regarding the way I should like a few of the most important matters managed." Then followed various suggestions relative to household affairs. "Do not hesitate to alter any of these arrangements if you think best; I shall be perfectly satisfied. The remodelling of Susanne's room must



be attended to during our absence, and I shall be very thankful if you will take a personal oversight of the workmen and see that the little nest is made as cosy and inviting as possible. In her last letter she expressed so much admiration for the way in which Edwin Stürmer has furnished his home, that I have endeavored to model ours after the same general style, so far at least as my plain taste will admit of such luxurious display. The verandah also must be renovated. And now, my dear Anna Marie, comes the most important of all. In the secret drawer in the right-hand side of my secretary, you will find the papers necessary for the proclamation of the marriage banns. Please give these to Pastor Grüne. The certificate of Susanne's baptism and the marriage license, which I had sent me from Berlin, are already in his hands, being sent in the same mail with this letter. Remember me kindly to the old man, and tell him to make the announcement gently as possible from the chancel next Sabbath."

My niece handed me the letter, and went with her basket of keys into her brother's room. "How will they ever manage to run this establishment," I whispered, "if she leaves Bütze? She has thoroughly spoiled them all. As I read his request about the papers, my old head commenced to reel, and I was overwhelmed with thoughts of what had occurred yesterday, what was occurring to-day, and vague forebodings of what was yet to come.

I limped over to Anna Marie who was standing before

her brother's open desk with the papers in her hand. "Aunt Rosamunde," she began, "I wish to-day was over, for when I think of Klaus I am almost distracted," then laying the time-yellowed sheets upon the shelf of the closet-shaped secretary, she quietly folded her hands upon them. "It seems almost heartless," she continued, "for me to be looking forward to so much joy when I know he — will not be happy. Aunt, dear aunt," she sobbed, "I cannot help it, I do not love Klaus a whit the less, but believe me, I have not the courage a second time to refuse such" — The sentence was never finished; with cheeks tinged with scarlet she again took up the papers and closed the desk. "I hardly know what I am doing to-day," she whispered, "indeed, I scarcely know what I am saying — I wish it was night, I feel so anxious" —

"Never mind, my dear," I interrupted, seizing her hand, "you need not tell me. I knew long ago that you only refused Edwin Stürmer because you did not wish to leave Klaus."

Retreating a few steps, she looked at me in terrified bewilderment. "No, no, it was not that, it was my duty; he had sacrificed so much for my sake."

"Anna Marie, I do not understand you!"

"The lady to whom he was engaged, I know all about it," she continued. "She gave up my poor dear Klaus because I was in the way; oh, what he must have suffered!"

"How you ever came to learn this, my child, is a

mystery to me," I rejoined, "but tell me, darling, was this the reason you refused Edwin?"

"Please don't mention it, aunt!" she cried, "I do not want to think about it, it all seems like a dark, confused dream; I cannot tell you how I felt, what I endured, I cannot now realize it myself; some time I will tell you all about it, but not to-day. One thing, though, you must promise me, aunt," she continued beseechingly, with tearful eyes, "you must always keep an eye on Klaus yourself and take good care of him, and when he seems troubled or unhappy let me know at once. I cannot believe that he will ever be happy with Susanne! Dear Aunt Rose, why must it be she — why not some one worthier of his love?"

"Do not worry about it, my child, it all rests in God's hands."

"You are right, Aunt Rose," she replied, a pretty pink color mounting into her face, "I will not allow anything to annoy me to-day, I will not borrow trouble, but try to be cheerful, and thankful for my own happiness. Indeed, I hardly know what to think of myself, I am so dull of comprehension, so slow at grasping such things. Only yesterday I felt so happy that I wanted to open my arms and embrace the whole world. I could not sleep, but walked nervously up and down my room and read his letter a dozen times. As long as my eyes rested on it I was quiet and easy, but no sooner had I folded it up than doubts of the worst and most harassing kind entered my mind, doubts as to whether, after all, I might

not be mistaken, whether he had not something else about which he wished to talk to you, something that had no reference to me? Then I seemed to sink into some deep, dark abyss, and was unable to find anything on which I could lean for support. Oh it was so frightful, so dark and cold and deathlike! Dear Aunt Rosamunde, laugh at these foolish fears, scold me for being such a silly girl, tell me how little faith I have to allow myself to doubt Edwin's love. I am sure he loves me, you know it yourself do you not? Such true heart love never dies, does it? I know it seems ludicrous, and I should really like you to laugh at my folly."

While she was talking, she had drawn me down on the sofa and laid her head on my shoulder. Between tears and laughter came her words. All self-consciousness had vanished, her unapproachable, stand-off way had entirely disappeared, and she was now precisely like every other maiden who with joyful certainty awaits the formal declaration of her lover's devotion. Trembling and sighing, she threw her arms fondly round me. The proud, indifferent Anna Marie had become a loving, affectionate girl. What a stream of love and devotion now gushed from her heart, when touched by the prospect of this ineffable happiness! "Laugh at me, aunt," she said again, merrily, "yes, laugh me out of my foolish fears and misgivings."

Fondly I stroked her hair; gladly would I have charmed away not only the fear of evil, but, had it lain in my power, the evil itself. But my own soul was not

free from apprehension and doubts, inexplicable doubts, and why? Certainly they had no reasonable foundation, no, no! Might not Susanne have deceived me simply because she had been forbidden, on account of her health, to go into the evening air? merely because she was under that linden and waved the white handkerchief—no, surely that was no proof, no convincing evidence. Suddenly I thought of my letter to Edwin Stürmer, and could not refrain from smiling.

“Anna Marie,” I said, “the laughing will not all be on my side, I too have something to confess which I am sure will amuse you; just think, I couldn’t keep our secret any longer, and so wrote the baron yesterday and told him of Klaus’s engagement!”

She rose with a sudden start, exclaiming, “Oh the papers! I am forgetting everything, the certificate—I must attend to that first.”

The hours to-day passed much more slowly than usual. Four o’clock found me seated by my window in half-glad, half-sad expectancy; my own heart beat almost as quickly, I fancied, as that of my niece, who I knew was waiting in anxious disquietude in the room below. The clock struck half-past four, and again, after what seemed an interminable half-hour, sounded out five clear, distinct strokes. At this juncture, Susanne entered my room, and seating herself beside me commenced playing with the kitten which she carried in her arms.

My first impulse was to send her away, but I could find no excuse for such a proceeding. There is some-

thing almost terrifying in the slow pace at which the minutes drag themselves along when one is counting them in anxious expectation; every second seems weighty as time, and long as eternity; the least sound startles one — “no, that was a haymaker, now a rider — oh, it’s only the overseer!”

Susanne was certainly affected by my reticence and painful uneasiness, for with a sigh she said, “Dear me, the country is terribly lonely in winter; what can one do to while away the time?”

“Have you written to Klaus?” I asked.

“No, indeed, I have not,” she replied, suppressing a yawn, “I hardly know what to say, it’s so intolerably quiet and dull here, I never see nor hear anything.”

“Well, it’s rather remarkable to hear a young lady admit that she can find nothing of interest to write to her future husband,” I retorted.

“Yes?” she replied, with an air of indifference, “perhaps it is, but for my part I find it intolerably stupid to be always harping on variations of the one theme, ‘I love you.’”

“Klaus has surely told you, Susanne, that next Sabbath your marriage will be announced from the chancel.”

With a terrified expression in her wide-opened eyes, she stared at me for a moment, then stammered, “I do not know — I” —

“But certainly, you know what he has written,” I interrupted, impatiently.

“Yes, but I” — Placing her hand in her pocket, she

drew out the letter in question, "I haven't read it yet, I wanted first — I thought this evening — but" —

"You haven't opened it yet," I exclaimed with amazement, "I never heard of such a thing. You complain of time hanging heavily on your hands, and carry unopened in your pocket a letter, which ought to be to you the most interesting thing in the world! Really, the variations of that familiar theme seem to be wearisome to you, Susanne."

I had spoken in loud tones, with unusual severity, and she listened in silence. Again an oppressive feeling of anxiety such as I experienced yesterday, came upon me, but as I heard the low sobbing of the young girl before me, I regretted my harshness. "Susanne," I said gently, "you are about taking the most important step of your life, and you act as thoughtlessly as a frivolous child."

All unexpectedly she burst into tears.

"How can I help it," she called, wringing her hands, "am I allowed to have any will of my own? Doesn't every one treat me as a child? What shall I do?" what shall I do? and the passionate young creature throwing herself at my feet, sobbed, "Dear, dear Aunt Rosamunde, won't you have pity on me and not allow me to become so unhappy, I" —

What else she might have said I never knew, for the door opened and Anna Marie's voice fell on our ears so faint, so oppressed, that I heard the quickened beating of my own heart, and Susanne sprang instantly from the floor.



“Aunt Rosamunde — Susanne — Baron Stürmer wishes — is waiting — to bid you good-by.”

Distinctly I see them all now as they appeared in that minute, my niece supporting herself on the back of the chair, Edwin beside her with his eyes fastened on Susanne. Mrs. Brockelmann holding the lamp behind her, and clinging to me, the trembling sobbing girl, who with woebegone aspect and moistened eyes, blankly returned Edwin Stürmer's gaze. The next moment everything seemed confused, it was incomprehensible to me how Edwin came to be beside my niece, but instinctively I saw that an arrow had pierced deep into her young heart, and my own mourned and bled for her.

“Anna Marie,” I stammered, endeavoring to free myself from Susanne's embrace, but Edwin Stürmer stepped to meet me.

“I intend starting to-morrow morning on a long journey, Fräulein Rosamunde,” he remarked, in a firm, clear voice, “and have come to bid you farewell, I decided to go somewhat suddenly, but you know that is nothing unusual for me. I am very much obliged for your letter.” Kissing my hand he turned to Susanne, and there was a perceptible quiver round the corners of his mouth, as, with a polite but formal bow, he offered his congratulations, and wished her much happiness.

She gazed vacantly at him, as if unable to comprehend his words; her arm slipped from my waist and she motioned to him, but already he had turned, bent low over Anna Marie's hand, and left the room. Even yet I can

hear the door closing behind him, and his footsteps retreating along the hall, and see the despair in the countenance of my dear niece as she looked after him. Stately and erect she stood, a sickly smile hovering round her tightly-closed lips, her head bent proudly back, though her heart was well-nigh broken.

"Anna Marie," I called, hastening towards her. Without looking up she pointed to Susanne who had fallen unconscious on the floor.

"She," she said, feebly, "he loved her, both loved her. And I — ?" Sorrowfully she drew her hand across her brow adding, "Nothing left, aunt; nothing left for me in all this great, wide world" —

Stooping down to the still insensible child, she picked her up in her strong arms; the beautiful head with its dark curling locks resting wearily upon her breast; she looked for a moment at the colorless face, then carrying her up, laid her on the couch in her own room.

"I want you to see to Susanne," she said to Isabella, who stood wringing her hands, "and, if necessary, send at once for the doctor." She stepped out of the door before me, but I hurried after, for at this moment Susanne gave me but little concern.

"Anna Marie," I asked, "where are you going? Come into my room, darling, and tell me all about it. Come, unburden your heart to your old aunt. Do not try to keep back the tears, it would do you good to cry."

She stood still, and, looking me directly in the face, replied, "I do not know what you want me to tell you —

and cry? I cannot cry. You need not feel anxious about me, nothing hurts me, nothing at all. I should like to be alone, I want to collect my thoughts. Please leave me."

With her usual firm step she proceeded along the hall, composedly lowering the light of a smoking lamp; when she reached the landing, I heard her, in a deep, clear voice, address some remark to Mrs. Brockelmann; then the sound of her step grew fainter and fainter, until it finally died away.

What she experienced as she communed with her own heart, in the solitude of her chamber, I cannot say. Late in the evening, I listened at her door, but within those walls reigned a deathlike stillness.

Her livid, careworn face, the dark shadows under her eyes, and the heartrending sadness of her expression the next morning, however, gave me unmistakable proof that she had that night lived through the saddest hours of her life. The former coldness, the freezing reserve once more confronted me; she held her fair head defiantly as of old, and the dictatorial manner, which I hoped had vanished forever, greeted me anew. Anna Marie did not yield to despair; she indulged in no passionate complaint. With her innate, maidenly pride she had conquered her poor, bleeding heart, and no one save myself could see that it had been almost mortally wounded. The pain, the bitterness of the conflict were known only to herself. Who would dare to intrude into a privacy so carefully guarded, so strongly barred?

It was thus she stepped the next morning into Susanne's room, and up to the side of the bed, where the sobbing girl lay. Susanne had been crying almost uninterruptedly since her restoration to consciousness the day before, and was still weeping bitterly. She looked like a veritable Niobe, and the fountain of her tears seemed inexhaustible. With flushed face, Isabella kept watch by her side; having during the night exhausted all her resources in vain attempts to comfort her, and, finding her efforts unsuccessful, she had finally subsided, and now feigned ignorance of the cause of the girl's trouble. "I cannot imagine, Fräulein Anna Marie," she whispered, "what is the matter with Susanne — oh, these unfortunate nerves. I do not understand it." I noticed, however, that the sallow little creature looked unmistakably subdued.

"Susanne," said Anna Marie, with peremptory firmness, "stop crying and tell me what is wrong with you. Perhaps we can help you."

"No, no, you mustn't disturb the child," hastily cried Isabella, pressing forward towards Anna Marie, "she is so excited now, she doesn't know what she is talking about; you couldn't rely on what she said, if she did tell you."

Susanne made no response, but ceased crying, turned her face from Anna Marie and lay still as a mouse, though the violent panting of her breast betrayed her deep agitation.

"Try to be quiet, Susanne, and do not give way to

your feelings," repeated Anna Marie; "as soon as you can control yourself, I have something to tell you, something that will correct a very wrong impression under which, I fear, you are laboring." Turning from the sick child she glanced at the glasses beside her bed, and asking Isabella if Susanne was fond of lemonade, left the room. She had greeted me with only a hasty good-morning, but now returned to say something further, and, as we stood together in the corridor, I held her hands fondly in mine.

I fully realized that no words of comfort were desired, that no consolation would be acceptable to one of my niece's temperament, yet, as I gazed upon her sad face, I could not refrain from dropping a sympathizing tear. As her eyes met mine, an expression of sharp pain flitted over her countenance, a deep sob rose from her breast, but with strong determination she controlled herself, and pointing to Susanne's door, said, "There is the worst — my poor Klaus!" Then, pressing my hand, she started as usual on the ordinary rounds of the household duties. Not many could have followed in her footsteps.

When I reëntered Susanne's chamber, I found her sitting up in bed, wringing her hands. "Nobody ever asked me about it," she repeated, with tears coursing down her cheeks; "my own wishes were not consulted or considered. They have driven me on just as they wanted me to go,—and now, now,"—here she murmured something in subdued tones which I could not

understand, then ceased weeping, but only to renew her plaintive wail, "Nobody loves me, nobody at all."

"Pay no attention to her, Fräulein Rosamunde," pleaded Isabella, "she really doesn't know what she's talking about. Just go, and leave me alone with her." The little woman manifested deep anxiety and concern. She ran restlessly back and forth from bed to window, and from window to bed, called the weeping girl by all the endearing pet names known to her vocabulary, resorted to every means in her power to quiet her darling, but in vain. Susanne wept so passionately, so continuously, that it began to be alarming; she refused to allow Isabella to go near her, and wrung her hands like one in wild despair.

I stood helplessly by, as long as the child was in this excited condition. I dared not approach her, even to say, "Susanne, what have you done? You have pledged your troth to a man of unquestioned honor, and you love another. You have wrought trouble and mischief in a home, which hospitably opened its door to receive you as one of its inmates. You have made three happy hearts miserable. Is this your thanks for all their kindness?" But again her bitter cry pierced my heart. "Nobody consulted my wishes; they drove me on just as they wanted me to go, and I had not the courage to resist." Suddenly there rose before me visions of that evening when, through howling wind and driving rain, she had run away to Isabella. I remembered how Klaus had brought her back, and called her his own. Had he



asked her if she loved him? No, he never doubted that she did, and had gone away with implicit faith that his devotion was returned. Had not Anna Marie, too, clasped her to her heart, and called her sister? And had not Klaus, on his return, placed on her finger the engagement ring? She lacked courage to thrust him back and tell him she did not love him; and even with this pledge shining on her hand, had trifled with his affection, and, with her usual frivolity and thoughtlessness, allowed herself to fall deeper and deeper in love with another. Her betrothed was far away beyond the sound of her sad lamentation. Stürmer, with a fresh wound in his heart, was about starting again to wander through the wide world. Susanne had suddenly awakened from her dream, and was on the very verge of despair, and Anna Marie and Klaus, — what was to become of them?

Mrs. Brockelmann unexpectedly handed me a letter from the baron, and stepping into my room to peruse it, I found that it was written from Dambitz, and ran thus, —

“DEARLY ESTEEMED FRAÜLEIN ROSAMUNDE, — I do not like to depart on my long journey without offering a word of explanation, and at the same time thanking you for your friendly note; it deterred me from taking a step which must have proved very painful to me in more ways than one. Perceiving, with your delicate womanly tact, that I was not indifferent to the charms of Susanne Mattoni, you wished to shield me from disappointment. My dear Fräulein Rosamunde, I need not deceive you; Susanne is very dear to me, and I intended yesterday to ask you to speak a good word in my behalf. She certainly encouraged me to think that my affection was returned.

“My fondest hopes seem doomed to be frustrated in your house



—it is the second time I have been bitterly disappointed. I now begin to regard myself as the most arrogant of men. For years I strove in vain to conquer my grief at Anna Marie's refusal to love me; it was no easy task, for I felt sure of winning her heart and hand. Finally, however, I succeeded; I reasoned with myself that she was right, that we were unsuited to each other, and she would probably be unhappy with a person whose disposition was so diametrically opposite to her own. Then I met Susanne — fell in love with the intended bride of my dearest friend.

“What remains for me? Once more I will turn my back on my dear old home, and endeavor to forget the past.

“In Bütze all will move on in the same old channel, and I—go. But you — you who have already surmised this — I would not leave in doubt and uncertainty. Pardon me if I have said aught to cause you anxiety, and let me assure you it was unintentional. Think of me often, and think of me kindly. When I return to the old homestead, Susanne will be the wife of my friend Klaus, and I — a sedate, settled man, who has long since ceased to remember the dreams of his youth. I should like to imprint on your hand a good-by kiss, and ask you to consider what I have confided to you as a secret. No one, save perhaps, Susanne, will ever imagine why I am leaving. She will miss me for a short time, but in her great happiness will soon forget me. Farewell. With kindest greetings, your devoted,

“EDWIN VON STÜRMER.”

The sheet trembled in my hand, and more than once, tears interfered with my reading.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, Pastor Grüne and his sister came to offer their congratulations. Yesterday he was first informed of the intended marriage. In painful embarrassment, my niece and I received the friendly wishes of our old friends. They inquired kindly for Susanne, and the good old man eulogized her beauty, and praised her happy, childlike disposition. Noticing Anna Marie's pale face, he took her hand, and in his earnest, friendly way, said, —

“My dear child, marriages are made in heaven; it is God who draws human hearts to each other, and ‘what God hath joined together let no man put asunder.’ In these days there are so few genuine love marriages that it should be a joy to every one to see a young couple prompted by such pure motives, step to God’s altar and enter into this holy union. God’s blessing upon Klaus von Hegewitz and the fair young creature to whom he has given his heart.”

The old man, who, long years before had held Klaus and Anna Marie at the baptismal font, was deeply moved, but in surprise he dropped my niece’s hand and gave a reproachful look as he saw her cold, unsympathizing countenance. She uttered not a syllable in response.

My old friend, Mamselle Grüne, had, a few minutes before, taken from her reticule a sheet of paper, which she slipped into my hand. Glancing at it now for the first time, I saw it was the printed announcement of Klaus and Susanne’s engagement. “We received ours early this morning,” she whispered, “although I saw Frau von R.’s yesterday, when we were in Oesfelde, at an afternoon coffee. You should have been there, Rosamunde, to see how interested the ladies were, and how anxious each one seemed to get the cards in her own hands.”

With no little concern I watched my niece, as the color alternately rushed into and receded from her face. At last the engagement was public, and in the chamber

above lay the youthful *fiancée*, wringing her hands and mourning the absence of another than her betrothed. How insignificant did my niece now esteem her own trouble in comparison with that of her dear brother! She reached for the paper, but after the first hasty glimpse, thrust it aside with scornful disgust. It was an interminably long, painful quarter of an hour, and many others, equally as trying, followed in its train.

The news of the engagement spread like wild-fire. We had one visitor after another, till Bütze seemed a rendezvous for the entire neighborhood. Pale with excitement, Mrs. Brockelmann received the unexpected guests. Carriage after carriage rolled up the garden drive; people whom we had not seen for years favored us to-day with their presence. Anna Marie sat in the midst of the quizzing, chatting groups, white as a marble statue, while with trembling hands Mrs. Brockelmann passed the wine and cake. Poor old soul! only to-day had she learned that her loved master intended to marry this little whip-poor-will. She felt the agony of that unceasing questioning almost as keenly as we did, and could with difficulty suppress her tears. Once, as she stepped past me, she whispered nervously, "I feel as if the world were coming to an end."

Anna Marie tried to force an appreciative smile, and expressed regret that a slight indisposition rendered Susanne unable to be presented to her friends to-day, adding, "We anticipate nothing serious."

"Tell us how it all happened! How did he become

acquainted with her? Where did he meet her? Who were her parents?" queried the matrons.

"Is she pretty, Fräulein Rosamunde? Do describe her to us. We are all longing to know what kind of a person Herr von Hegewitz, fancied; she must be bewitchingly charming," playfully teased the younger ladies.

The gentlemen professed to have heard of an entrancing beauty, but underneath all the complimentary and flattering remarks, I could detect an indefinable something, a tinge of surprise. I overheard Frau von B. whisper to the wife of Lawyer S., "The sister doesn't seem particularly delighted about it," and the latter reply, "Naturally, for her reign is over now. Heretofore, she held undisputed sway over her brother and all his household."

Poor Anna Marie! Mechanically, she responded to the diverse questions, told them Susanne was very beautiful and that her father had been an old friend of Klaus's, — indeed had been almost a father to him; but her manner was so stiff and cold that the guests looked at her in surprise and then cast knowing glances at each other.

Several hours had elapsed since I had seen Susanne, for I could not leave my niece alone with our guests. Mrs. Brockelmann had once whispered to me that Isabella had been inquiring the cause of the unusual stir, and had ordered a glass of Hungarian wine for Susanne, whereupon I sent her up to ascertain how the child was.

In the meantime the spry young chambermaid brought

in the lamps, lighted the burners of the old-fashioned chandelier, formed of polished antlers, and noiselessly as possible closed the creaking shutters from the outside. A few of the visitors now rose. The ladies took up their furs, the gentlemen their hats, and I watched them with a feeling of relief, for Anna Marie's deathlike pallor filled me with painful forebodings. Then, unawares, something occurred which robbed me of all self-control and caused me to sink into my chair. Mrs. Brockelmann had suddenly thrown open the door, and within its shining portals stood one whom I little dreamed of seeing at this moment — Susanne. Isabella's slender form loomed up for a moment in the background, then instantly vanished and the door closed.

In the ensuing pause all eyes were riveted upon the young creature who so unexpectedly joined their circle. Her momentary confusion only enhanced her beauty. Like an abashed, perplexed child she stood there in her lace-bedecked mourning attire, her head drooping slightly, and the pink flush in her cheeks deepening in tint with her increasing embarrassment.

Painful indeed was that moment, for Anna Marie made not the least advance to receive her. I saw Susanne compress her lips tightly, and her pleading eyes fell as they met my niece's freezingly cold look, which seemed to ask, "Pray what are you doing here?" It was only an instant, for the next moment I was at her side introducing her as *Fräulein Mattoni*. The ice was broken — every one pressed around her, shaking her

hand, and devouring her with glances of admiration. Her cheeks glowed, her eyes sparkled; not a trace of the morning's hot tears remained, and the mouth which had poured forth such grievous complaints now laughed in the greatest glee. Yonder, alone, stood my niece. God only knows the intensity of her suffering.

In honor of Susanne the guests reseated themselves, and, after the storm of conventional congratulatory phrases had subsided, commenced chatting about country life, and wondering if one used to the city could ever become accustomed to it. They asked Susanne how she was pleased with the Mark (that part of the country) and at last the wife of old General Z., whose possessions lay in close proximity to Dambitz, remarked, —

“Tell me, Fräulein von Hegewitz, is it true that Baron Stürmer has gone off again and deserted us?”

She had turned to my niece who, sitting stiffly beside her with fast rising color, responded, —

“He is now on the way to Paris, I believe.”

“The butterfly!” playfully exclaimed the amiable old lady, “I did hope so much that he would settle down and stay with us, but he seems to prefer the easy-going, roving life of a bachelor — did you say he had gone to Paris?”

“Well, Paris is not an unsuitable place for one of Stürmer's temperament,” chimed in Colonel von T., universally recognized as a leader of society, “if one could avoid it, he would be a very foolish fellow to bury himself in the solitude of this Märkish sand-box.”



Anna Marie gazed silently around, but Susanne's eyes sparkled at these words, which evidently accorded with her own ideas. She appeared to be revolving something in her mind and apparently arrived at a satisfactory solution of the subject, for a triumphant smile illumined her face. I could not divert my gaze from her; she was an enigma which I could not solve. Could this be the same Susanne who this morning was so inconsolable, and who now, with the seemingly unalloyed joy of a destined bride, sat in our midst blushing at the admiring glances bent upon her? *That* proved the longest, the most wearisome half hour I ever experienced.

At last, one by one, the guests arose, and bade us farewell. From every side Susanne received greetings for Klaus, for which she returned thanks with her usual charming courtesy and winsome smile.

"I can assure your ladyship," the colonel addressed me at parting, "that your future niece is the most beautiful girl I ever saw. She would be a pearl in any society. We hope your young ladies will lend their presence to grace our social gatherings this winter." Turning to Susanne he continued, "Even if we cannot boast of many gayeties, we hope you will favor us" — he kissed the tips of her dainty fingers and murmured in an undertone something about "the queen of rosebuds," at which Susanne laughed and graciously acceded to his request, saying, "Certainly, for I am very fond of dancing."

Before the last of the company had departed she had made at least a dozen promises, all in reference to the



approaching festivities of the coming season. All had expressed a desire for further opportunities of cultivating her acquaintance, and she, with radiant countenance, had graciously assured them that nothing would afford her greater pleasure. We all escorted our visitors to the door, but when the last carriage rolled away, Anna Marie and I were alone in the hall, Susanne having slipped away in the confusion of the leave-taking.

“Come, my child,” I said, seizing my niece’s hand and drawing her into my own room. She threw herself into Klaus’s easy chair, leaned her arms on the table, and buried her face in her hands. The next quarter of an hour passed in oppressive silence, neither of us having the heart to speak. Mrs. Brockelmann came in to clear away the dishes but, understanding a motion I made, withdrew, ominously shaking her head. The old time-piece ticked softly, the wind moaned and sighed through the branches, and now and again a dying ember faintly crackled ere its light went entirely out; it was almost painful to me to watch my poor, stricken, but uncomplaining niece.

“Anna Marie,” I said at last.

She started. “Yes, I am coming,” she replied. “I will ask her. Better to bear the reproaches of a few outsiders, than to have misery here in our own home. Better to make Klaus temporarily unhappy than to have him deceived and made wretched for the rest of his life; come, aunt.” Resolutely she left the room, proceeded along the corridor and ascended the stairs.

With rapidly pulsating heart, I followed in her footsteps. "Anna Marie," I entreated, "not now, not today! You are too much excited, come back with me to my room." In vain I pleaded. Determinately she pursued her course. By the glimmer of the lamp in the upper hall I espied before Susanne's door, a large flat box from under whose partially raised cover peeped the daintily scalloped edges of white tissue paper.

"What is that?" demanded Anna Marie of Mrs. Brockelmann, who had just stepped out of her room.

"The box? It came this afternoon from Berlin. I suppose it is from Mr. Klaus."

Anna Marie nodded and quickly opened the door. A dazzling stream of light burst upon our vision and brilliantly illumined the *petite* form of the maiden, who stood gazing in the mirror. She was arrayed in a satin robe of creamy whiteness, the soft lustrous folds of which, falling gracefully from her waist, lay in a courtly train upon the floor. A lace veil of finest texture was lying upon the nearest chair, and a pair of tiny satin slippers peeped out from a box on the dressing-table. As we entered she turned, and a bashful smile spread over her countenance. Susanne Mattoni was trying on her bridal dress!

Anna Marie relaxed her hold of the latch and with eyes riveted on Susanne and face crimsoned with indignation, stepped across the threshold. I can see her yet, advancing and confronting the nonplussed girl, her eyes

flashing and her whole countenance speaking the righteous indignation which filled her soul.

“Take off that dress,” she ordered, in a voice almost inarticulate from agitation.

Susanne turned pale, drew back, and looked up at Anna Marie.

“Take off that dress,” she repeated, more excitedly than before, “you are not worthy to wear it—as truly as I live, this miserable farce shall come to an end *now*.”

“Anna Marie,” I begged tremulously, catching the folds of her dress, “do not talk so! For heaven’s sake try and be more quiet.” All unheeded were my words, the usually cool, self-possessed girl was beside herself with grief and anger. In silence, without a murmur, she had borne her own sorrow, but the thought of Klaus, the conviction that he was being grossly deceived by one on whom he had bestowed his noble, loving heart, robbed her of her usual calm deliberation and took from her the last vestige of self-control.

Speechless, but with a penitent look upon her girlish face, Susanne stood before her, unable to resist or say a word in self-defence. Anna Marie’s grief was too much for her. At that moment, unfortunately, Isabella stepped between them and with a theatrical gesture and tone which at any other time would have been ludicrous, said, “Do not forget that you are addressing your brother’s intended bride.”

Anna Marie pushed her disdainfully aside, and catching Susanne firmly by the shoulder said, with a com-

posure evidently forced, "Tell me, Susanne, do you not feel, do you not realize what you are about doing? Are you, yet so young, so hardened that you have lost all sense of duty and honor? Is this wretched farce you are playing all your return for the kindness you have received in this house?"

Susanne tried to free herself from my niece's hold, crying defiantly, "I do not know what you mean. I am doing nothing wrong."

Anna Marie looked at her in amazement, as if failing to comprehend her words—a horrible pause ensued. Then the storm broke forth again in greater fury than before, and like a whirlwind raged the anger of the proud girl.

"You are doing nothing wrong!" she cried, in wild dismay, "doing nothing wrong, and you are even now deceiving the most honorable of men, and are just about ready to swear a false oath? Your eyes have wistfully followed another and wept for him—I tell you, so long as my tongue retains the power of speech, I will never cease to accuse you to my brother. He shall not, if I can prevent it, fall a victim to your wiles." For a moment she shook the girl vigorously, then as if collecting herself, thrust her away. Susanne trembled, tottered, and sank to the floor, striking her head against the carved back of one of the easy chairs and uttering a piercing cry.

It was a moment of indescribable suspense. Her eyes were closed, but a tiny stream of blood oozed slowly

down from her temple and stained the wedding dress. We were almost paralyzed with fright; even Isabella, who was mournfully sobbing and wailing, ceased her lamentations, and devoted all her energies to bathing the forehead of the little sufferer and endeavoring to restore her to consciousness.

Anna Marie looked absently at the swooning child, then suddenly covered her face with her hands, and hastily left the room. I assisted Isabella in getting Susanne to bed, and removing the unfortunate dress. It hangs yet in yonder closet and still bears in the folds of its yellowed lace, the identical stains which disfigured it that day. Isabella said nothing, but her behavior was sullen and contemptuous. Occasionally she kissed the child's hands and brushed away the tears which, forcing their way from between the curling lashes, ran slowly down the girlish cheeks.

I, too, remained quiet. What was there to be said? That which was done could not be undone, and at the moment the future seemed doubly dark. At the first sign of returning consciousness, I left Susanne alone with Isabella and went in search of Anna Marie, whom I found in the sitting-room occupying her customary seat in front of her spinning wheel. Her hands lay idly in her lap and her eyes were downcast, but as I advanced she roused herself and commenced spinning, though her foot rested heavily on the fragile treadle and the thread trembled in her fingers. Her face was alarmingly pale and her lips so tightly compressed, that it

looked, as if they would never again utter a friendly, cheerful word.

“Anna Marie,” I said, standing before her, “what now?” but there came not the semblance of a response.

“You forgot yourself this morning, my dear girl,” I continued. “I fear Klaus will feel deeply aggrieved at what has happened.”

Again no reply, but the treadle on which her foot rested gave a peculiar creak, then suddenly snapped in two. She sprang up, pushed back the spinning-wheel, and pressing her hand to her forehead, cried in a beseeching voice, “Leave me, oh leave me alone!”

“Write to Klaus and ask him to come home,” I suggested. She reseated herself, supporting her head in her hands, “I will bring you the paper and ink, Anna Marie, or would you prefer that I should write?”

She shook her head saying, “Do not worry me, aunt, I hardly know if I am in my right mind. Please leave me alone.”

I hesitated, for her face wore such a wan, distracted look I had not the courage to comply with her request. “Go,” she again entreated, “it is all you can do for me.”

I left her, feeling she was right; for in such a condition it is agony even to breathe in the presence of another. But why did she not fly to the solitude of her own chamber? On the staircase I turned, intending to ask her if she would not drink a glass of lemonade, and then retire. The sitting-room was dark, but through the



crack of the door leading into Klaus's room I saw a light. She had taken refuge there.

Strange days followed. A dense fog enveloped the house in gray mist, that ere long was scattered by a furious storm, which chased the lowering clouds rapidly athwart the darkened heavens, and drove the pelting rain wildly against the windows. The gloomy darkness of the large rooms was intensified by the dismal frame of mind of their various occupants. Without, it seemed as if the sun would never again smile upon us, and within it was still more dreary. Peace, joy, and hope seemed to have spread their pinions and winged their flight to some fairer realm, leaving us in the depths of despair.

Two days had dragged their weary length along since that eventful evening, and still Anna Marie maintained unbroken silence. She had occupied her usual seat at our noonday meal, but refused to eat, and in the afternoon, despite the rain and storm, had wandered for hours in the garden. Mrs. Brockelmann tearfully insisted that I should send for the doctor. Her young mistress, she informed me, had taken some strange notion in her head and was grieving so much about it that she feared it would soon affect her brain. Anna Marie was not herself; did she regret her hasty conduct? or was she dreading to meet her brother? I was unable to decide. She had not written to him. At first I had intended doing so myself, but afterwards abandoned the idea, thinking he must soon come, and the longer the interval



before his arrival, the more calm and quiet we should all be.

Susanne sat in her own room with bandaged forehead and tearful eyes, gazing out of her window into the leafless garden beneath. Several times I had visited her and tried to reason with her as gently and kindly as possible. I wanted to show her how wrong she had been, and to explain that it was only Anna Marie's intense love for her brother, and a fear that he was being deceived, that had caused her to forget herself and act as she did. But here also I encountered silent, stubborn resistance. Isabella only remarked, with flashing eyes, "My poor child has been treated shamefully; she has been cruelly abused." Whether or not Susanne had written to Klaus I was unable to ascertain.

. . . . .

Towards the evening of the thirteenth of November, I saw from my bedroom window a special stage drive hurriedly through the garden gate. "More visitors," I exclaimed; "but I guess they will fare no better than others who have called recently, and, finding no one to receive them, have turned and driven away." But, no, the stage stopped, and a manly form alighted. My heart throbbed violently from fright. Klaus!—What had induced him to come to-day?

Should I hasten to meet him and prevent him from going to Anna Marie? Should I first give him an intimation of what had occurred? But how? Could I even mention it without inflicting a mortal wound?

Already it was too late ; his steps sounded on the stairs, he had probably inquired for Susanne and, being told she was in her own room, was going directly to her. I involuntarily stepped into the hall, and that instant beheld the blushing girl rush into his outstretched arms. "Klaus, Klaus, my dear Klaus!" fell upon my ear in accents of such melting tenderness and joyful exultation as I supposed could come only from the lips of a happy maiden greeting her long absent lover. Poor Anna Marie! even if you could speak to him now with the tongue of an angel, it would be too late, all would prove unavailing.

I saw how he pressed her to his heart, how she threw her arms lovingly around his neck, and again and again raised her quivering lips, as if pleading for another kiss. I heard her begin to sob, first softly, then more and more violently, and at last, clinging to him like a wounded deer, exclaim, "But all will be right now, for you are here!"

I heard her coaxing him into her room, heard his earnest, passionate reply, then the door closed, and I quietly retired, murmuring, "Entrapped, entrapped as Tannhäuser once was in Horselberg." And bitter tears gushed from my eyes as I descended the stairs to go to Anna Marie.

Mrs. Brockelmann met me, and excitedly announced that the master had come, but Anna Marie would not believe it. Without knocking I entered her room. She sat on the little sofa. Her New Testament lay on the

table before her. In the gray purple of the gloaming, her large eyes looked out from her mournful, dejected countenance with an expression that pierced my inmost soul.

"Klaus has come, my child," I said, advancing towards her.

She looked at me incredulously.

"I have seen him, Anna Marie, he is really here."

"Where is he, then?" she questioned, "why doesn't he come to me?"

"My dear child," I said, taking her hand, "he is with Susanne."

Her head sank. "But he will come soon," she replied; "yes, he must surely come. He will want something to eat, and he will want to reproach me. I wish he would come and tell me how wicked I am, what a wrong I have committed. Then I could have an opportunity of explaining everything to him, and could talk to him freely about this weight that presses so heavily on my heart. Perhaps it might have some little influence; it might recall what we have experienced together; he might remember how very dearly I love him."

I pressed her hand, seating myself quietly at her side. That sweet, childish voice still echoed in my ear, "Klaus, Klaus, my dear Klaus," and even yet I heard her distressed sobbing. It was the first time Susanne had ever greeted him with heartfelt joy and delight, the first time she had ever given expression to the intense

longing which she had felt to see him, and the sorrow which she experienced while he was absent. Such an enchanted draught intoxicates the most sober, and Klaus had already yielded to its charms. And now if he learned first from her own lips the cause of her tears? If he raised the bandage from her forehead? It would be enough to make the most quiet of men furious as a tiger, and he was not quiet, any more than Anna Marie was. God help them both! I trembled when I thought of the first meeting between brother and sister.

The growing darkness rendered the various objects in the apartment almost indiscernible. The souging wind bent and curved the long, naked branches of the old elms into manifold weird, fantastic shapes which, even in the dreary gloom, I could see from the window, nodding and winking, as if trying to lure us into the clutches of their embrace. And Anna Marie was waiting. She started at the least stir. I fancied I could hear her heart beat, but each time she had been disappointed.

“At last, at last!” No mistake now; that was his step. Proudly she rose and murmured, “Klaus, my brother Klaus.” Then summoning up all her courage, she resolved to refer to the peculiarly tender and loving relation which they sustained to each other, and murmured, with touching pathos, “my only brother.”

In that simple phrase lay her destiny.

Klaus's voice resounded through the hallway, and he seemed to be giving various directions. For a moment,

it grew clearer and more distinct, then his step receded, and the next moment we heard the heavy closing of the front door.

"He is going," exclaimed Anna Marie, "he is going, and I have not seen him; he has not even inquired for me."

"No, oh no, my child," I said, striving to comfort her, "he cannot be going. Where should he go? Try to compose yourself, he has something to say to the overseer, or perhaps he is giving orders about his luggage; let me go and inquire, and if you will sit down quietly I promise to bring him to you before long."

It was easy for me to lead her from the door to the sofa; the strong, resolute girl, exhausted by anxiety and dread, was passive as a child.

Kissing her forehead, I hastened on my way; in the corridor I met Mrs. Brockelmann, hurrying along, overheated and excited, and her little white cap all awry. In one hand she held a burning candle, while with the other she was nervously trying to loosen the large bunch of keys from her apron string. Close behind her followed the chambermaid bearing a basket of wood.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the old woman, in reply to my astonished query as to the cause of her haste, "I wish I knew myself. I have orders to make a fire and illuminate the parlor. Everything is to be ready in half an hour, and just think, the furniture hasn't been uncovered for more than a year. I think Master Klaus has literally lost his senses."

With trembling hands she unlocked the massive folding-doors leading into the two apartments known as the *salon* and the red-room, and which since my childhood I had never known to be opened save on special state occasions. In days gone by, a highly aristocratic company had assembled here twice or thrice a year to partake of a sumptuous but formal dinner, and to enjoy a dance. Within these walls many generations of the Hegewitz family had been baptized and married, and here many a cofined form had reposed before it was borne to its final resting-place in the garden vault.

What did Klaus intend to-day? Involuntarily I followed Mrs. Brockelmann into the *salon*; the fluttering candle she carried but dimly lighted the spacious room although here and there, by its faint glimmer, we could see the bright flashing hues of the prisms dangling from the crystal chandelier and discern the gray-covered furniture in the numerous nooks and corners round the wall, looking like suddenly disturbed apparitions. In great haste the old woman began to pull off the covers, and ere long, under the dexterous hand of the chambermaid, the first struggling flames of the freshly kindled fire rose in the open grate. I looked on as one in a dream.

“What in the world does it all mean?” I asked, with a strange feeling of oppression.

Mrs. Brockelmann was too busy spreading the tapestry rugs before the large sofas to give an immediate reply. “Sophie, you may go now and tell Christopher



that in a quarter of an hour he may come and light the chandelier. I suppose they will hold out," she said, glancing at the half-consumed wax candles of the centre and side lights. The girl obeyed promptly. Mrs. Brockelmann then paused in her work and turning to me said excitedly, —

“One who lives to be old and gray passes through a good many wonderful experiences. Sometimes it seems to me as if the whole world was topsy-turvy, but that anything like this should ever have happened. — Do you know, gnädiges Fräulein, where Mr. Klaus has gone, without even so much as saying ‘how do you do’ to his sister? To Pastor Grüne’s — and that miserable old creature upstairs has stripped the myrtle which you gave the strange little miss, so bare that it looks like a rod for chastising naughty children. And that giddy young thing does nothing much but lie on the sofa and play with her kitten; she laughs even when the tears are in her eyes, and grins so that you can see almost every tooth in her head, because the time is drawing so near. Gnädiges Fräulein, they have wept and wailed so much that I can easily understand why Mr. Klaus has lost his senses. The little fraud declared that she had been so badly treated, and dreadfully scolded, she wouldn’t stay here another hour, and when I answered the master’s call, I found him holding her in his arms and looking as pale as chalk. He told me to get everything in readiness as quickly as possible. In another hour it will all be over; yes, even if an angel were to drop from heaven



it wouldn't prevent the marriage, — in another hour they will be husband and wife.”

“Impossible!” I stammered, “Anna Marie” — My head swam, I could scarcely stand; then it was irrevocably settled that he was to wed Susanne — and at once.

This rash decision proved beyond doubt that Klaus was furious. What use now for me to say to Anna Marie, “Quiet yourself, my dear, there is no more hope; it is too late to effect any change.” In her present state of mind she would have fallen at his feet and poured out her complaints against Susanne; indeed, I believe she would not have scrupled to do so, had he stood with her before the altar; while he, in his wild passion for the beautiful young creature, would have disbelieved it all and demanded proof. And proof? Who could accuse her of a falsehood? Could she help being beloved by Stürmer? Was there any evidence that she had wept pitifully and wrung her hands in despair at his departure? Could any one lay it to her charge that Stürmer had fancied his love returned? It would have been the maddest folly to enrage Klaus further, to say to him now, “Give her up, she can never make you happy.”

Vacantly I watched Mrs. Brockelmann's progressing preparations; in restless anxiety I saw her light the burners at the sides of the large mirrors; the crystal pendants reflected the brightness; the gilded frames of the old family portraits shone with dazzling splendor, the deep rich crimson of the furniture and draperies gleamed in the cheerful glow, while the hissing, crackling

flames of the newly-lighted fire were fast taking the chill from the frosty atmosphere.

Suddenly I started, remembering that Anna Marie was in her lonely chamber waiting for me; I must go; my place was with her. Finding she had not moved during my absence, I seated myself in the darkness, by her side.

“He has gone,” she asked, “has he not?”

“No,” I said, “he will be back shortly.”

“To see me?”

“I cannot say, my child.”

“What does all that opening and shutting of doors mean?” she inquired, after a pause, “and why am I sitting here so cowardly, as if I were afraid? I have done nothing wrong. I need not wait till he comes to me. I can go and meet him.”

Again she rose, and with resolute step was about to carry out her determination, but ere her hand had touched the latch, the door opened, and Pastor Grüne stood before us, clad in his official robes.

Anna Marie shrunk back, amazed at his unexpected appearance. The old gentleman was evidently embarrassed, but after a momentary hesitation, stepped up, and taking her hands in his, said, “Your brother requested me to come and ask a favor of you. For reasons he could not impart to me, he has decided to anticipate the time fixed for his wedding, and to have the ceremony performed to-day.”

Anna Marie’s pale face crimsoned deeply. “It is

impossible," she said, feebly, "it cannot be true; you must be mistaken."

"But my child," continued the fatherly old man, laying his hand on her shoulders, "look at me. See, I have come in my ministerial robes, all ready to perform the solemn act; your brother yearns to be reconciled to you before he takes this step; he does not desire this consummation of his own happiness without first clasping in loving forgiveness the hand of his only sister, to whom he has been united by such close and tender ties."

"I am not angry with my brother," was her low response.

"Not with him, perhaps, my child, but with her who in a few short hours will be his wife. He is deeply grieved at what has occurred, and he begs you from his innermost heart, to speak a word to the one he loves far better than life itself."

Anna Marie tried to shake off his hand.

"I ask for pardon," she cried, raising her head proudly aloft, indignation flashing from her eyes, "I ask pardon from *Susanne Mattoni*? Is Klaus literally mad, that he thinks I could so humiliate myself? Go, Herr Pastor, and tell him he should come and speak to me himself. I will fall at his feet and supplicate forgiveness if I have wounded him, but at the same time I will tell him what drove me to thrust the girl from me, and — Go, bring him to me before it is too late or I will ' —

"But, Anna Marie," he interrupted, with agitated voice, "subdue your defiant spirit. Judge not, that ye

be not judged,' are the words of Holy Writ. You have no right to force yourself between these two. From the very beginning you have been prejudiced against Susanne and have judged her childish failings too severely. Do you expect by complaints and reproaches to uproot the love from his heart? If so, you know not, foolish child, what love is, — love which is blind to such foibles, and loath to take offence. Relinquish your folly, my dear girl, and conquer yourself. You are possessed of a remarkably strong will and a brave heart. Do not destroy all the happiness of this solemn hour which already lacks its usual joyous, festive character. Your brother has told me that he and his young bride will start this evening on their wedding tour. Come, my child, heed the advice of a friend, and follow once more the counsel of your old pastor."

She retreated a few steps and replied softly, but firmly, "Justice to myself requires me to say, never."

"Anna Marie, do not allow yourself to act so. You will regret it bitterly," was his earnest response.

"Never," she reiterated. "I cannot stand before the altar and listen to a lie. My conscience would not permit it. My only hope was, that I might have an opportunity of talking to him myself and entreating him to give her up — but I know now he does not wish to see me or he would have been here ere this. It is impossible for me to grant his request, but believe me, I have excellent reasons for refusing to do so. Farewell, my beloved pastor."

Turning, she stepped to the window, pressed her forehead against the pane, and looked out into the gathering shadows of that sad November evening. She was apparently quiet, yet a close look revealed how deeply she was moved.

Without, a slow familiar tread arrested my attention. I stepped into the hall. "Klaus," I asked, looking into his blanched, troubled countenance, "why this terrible haste?"

"How could I help it? there was no alternative," he cried, impatiently; "I cannot remain here. Urgent business renders it necessary for me to be in Silesia, and I am obliged to take Susanne with me; what else could I do? Do you think I would subject her longer to such treatment? No, aunt, when I received the poor child's despairing letter, it was fortunate that I had not wings, that the delays incident to travel and the procuring of the marriage license in M—— detained me, for, I fear, I should not otherwise have been able to control myself. Anna Marie is self-willed, she is hard-hearted, devoid of feeling, or she could not refuse to be reconciled to Susanne and myself on such an occasion."

"Anna Marie loves you more than you know, Klaus," I said, with aching heart, "and if she is displeased with Susanne, let me tell you it is not without sufficient cause."

He paused. A deathlike pallor crept over his face, and with a composure which I saw he struggled to

assume, replied, "Aunt, do not destroy the remaining happiness of this hour. Susanne has told me all. Anna Marie, with her peculiar, prudish ideas of propriety, and in her one-sided way of looking at things, has regarded as a mortal sin, what was only an innocent, perfectly innocent, action of Susanne's."

At this moment Pastor Grüne stepped out of Anna Marie's room — alone. Never can I forget the sorrowful, disappointed look of poor Klaus, as he saw that he was unaccompanied by his sister.

For a moment we three remained silent. Then Klaus made a slight advance towards the door, but in that instant Isabella, like an evil spirit, stood beside him, as if conjured there; she wore her new black silk, and her withered, sallow countenance gleamed with triumphant joy and satisfaction.

"Susanne is waiting, gnädiger Herr," she whispered.

"I am coming," was the quick response, and turning to us, he remarked. "After all, it is better for me not to see her — I know her and I know myself, and I do want to remain composed."

Truly it was better. God only knows what might have been had they met face to face. I promised to be present during the ceremony, but went first to see my niece once more. She was still standing by the window, and apparently did not notice my entrance.

"Anna Marie," I said, "I shall be back soon, you will not be long alone."

Suddenly she sank on her knees and buried her head



in her mother's old armchair. "Alone!" she shrieked, "yes, alone for ever and ever."

A few moments later I was on my way to the *salon*. The hall lamps were ablaze, and the servants, with curious, delighted faces, were crowding around the entrance to the room. The report of the wedding had spread like lightning, even in the village. Opposite the door stood Marieken, gazing anxiously into the brightly illuminated apartment, in which Mrs. Brockelmann was still busy assisting the sexton to arrange the quickly-improvised altar. She pushed back the heavy silver candelabra and laid a few cushions before the table already covered with snowy damask, adorned with the time-honored escutcheon of the Hegewitz family. The altar had been arranged directly under the portrait of the deceased mother — perhaps intentionally, perhaps by chance.

Pastor Grüne waited a few seconds in the back part of the room, then came forward and glanced at me with an inquiring look.

I shook my head.

"It is too bad," he said, "that such a good kernel should be inclosed in such a prickly shell — Anna Marie lacks humility and sympathizing love; she really seems to be devoid of a tender, womanly heart."

"You do not understand the girl," I cried, reproachfully, with moistened eyes, "she is better than all the rest of us together."

"And though I bestow all my gifts to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not



charity, it profiteth me nothing," he repeated, impressively.

My poor, proud, unselfish Anna Marie! "Could they but know what I know," I thought bitterly, as my eyes fell on the lovely, charming creature who now entered, leaning on Klaus's arm. She was not arrayed in that unfortunate white robe, but wore the simple black lace dress in which Klaus had first seen her, with nothing but the myrtle wreath which adorned her dark, waving tresses to indicate that she was a bride. Full well Susanne understood the art of rendering herself bewitching and captivating, but never before had her efforts been crowned with such success as now, when without jewel or ornament, in charming simplicity, she wended her way to the altar. No wonder that Klaus could not raise his eyes from her, that he so fondly pressed the dainty arm within his own, and rejected as false and malicious, all they said against his childishly pure, and innocent beloved. Not even one hasty glance did he cast at me, as he stepped to the altar. Murmuring and whispering, the crowd pressed forward; I heard Anna Marie's name on many lips, and saw Isabella solemnly and majestically take her place near her darling.

Instantly the soft whispering subsided, and Pastor Grüne began to speak.

If I could only remember how he began! His words sounded in my ears but made no impression; I saw naught but Klaus, and the manly goodness shining out from his proud, handsome face, beaming with almost a

woman's tenderness. My thoughts wandered to Anna Marie who, crushed and broken-hearted, waited in the chamber above. Then I noticed how Klaus started, and every word pierced my wounded heart anew, —

“On this spot you once stood by the side of your mother's coffin, holding in your arms a precious burden, and swore with uplifted hand that you would shield and protect the infant child from the many dangers of life. Your fidelity to your vow has been witnessed with joy on earth and recorded in heaven. A sacred bond like this, which has united so closely an orphaned brother and sister, should never be sundered; no third party should be allowed to sever the holy tie. The wife” — he turned to Susanne — “should labor to win the blessing of the peacemaker, and should strive carefully to promote goodwill and harmony within her husband's home, that she may prove a blessing and not a curse. A love between brother and sister is not less holy than between husband and wife. The claims they have on one another are of long standing, and sacred; therefore I counsel you, the youthful bride, to let the first word of your new life be one of peace; with your hand in your husband's, go and sue for reconciliation with the sister who is not present to pray with us for your welfare. Go, and thus sanctify this hour which gives to you, a friendless orphan, a home and a loving protector. Even if you deem yourself the injured one, do not leave this house with the word of peace unspoken. Be gentle, be courteous, and ask yourself what part of the guilt rests upon your own shoulders.”

A few shining tears trickled down the face of the groom, while Susanne, like a child with wide opened eyes, listened eagerly to the words that fell from the lips of the godly man. She was evidently painfully touched by the earnest solemnity of the occasion.

The bridal was drawing to a close, the rings were exchanged, the solemn, decisive "yes" spoken, and Susanne Mattoni was Klaus's wife. The servants retired to their respective apartments. Pastor Grüne spoke a few more entreating words to Susanne, and Klaus silently pressed my hand between his own.

Mrs. Brockelmann served a cold lunch with champagne. Isabella brought down the furs and mantle. The young couple were to leave in half an hour — Pastor Grüne bade us farewell. Mrs. Brockelmann and Isabella had already withdrawn from the *salon*, and I was alone with Klaus and Susanne. Drawing his happy, smiling wife to himself I heard him whisper, "Susanne, let us go to her, I want you to tell her that you forgive her; let us part in peace from Anna Marie! You know she is my only, my dearly beloved sister."

The merry smile vanished and was instantly replaced by a look of defiance, her cheeks grew scarlet, and her drooping eyes filled with tears.

"It is my first request, Susanne," he implored.

Mutely she sprang up and standing on tiptoe, threw her arms around his neck and with a graceful inclination of her head raised her sweet, tear-stained face to his. Without a word he pressed her fondly to himself, and

kissed again and again the sweet, fresh lips, and the little red scar on her temple.

Unobserved, I slipped out. The word of peace remained unspoken.

An hour later the bright lights of the *salon* were extinguished and the house shrouded in darkness. Pure, feathery flakes were flying wildly through the air, and the ground was already white with a light, snowy covering. The soft crystals sank noiselessly upon the ground, obliterating every trace of the carriage wheels which so lately had rolled through the garden, and soon everything was enveloped in a garb of spotless purity.

## CHAPTER XVI.

No outward sign revealed Anna Marie's inward suffering. Her iron nature did not easily succumb, but she grew bitter, austere, and painfully unapproachable. She was not one of those whom grief subdues and softens; the effect on her temperament was the opposite, — she grew harder and harder.

The period which followed that wedding was indeed cheerless; cold and dreary were the ensuing days and weeks. At first I urged Anna Marie to write to her brother, that the rift between them might not widen, but her only response was a chilling smile. After a cursory glance at the introductory lines of the first letter she received from him, she indignantly tore it to pieces. I rescued the fragments and found, as one might not un-naturally expect, that they contained an enthusiastic outpouring of the rapturous bliss he was experiencing in his honeymoon. A short, business-like notice that he had disposed advantageously of his Silesian property and intended taking Susanne to Paris, had probably escaped her observation.

Several other of his epistles, after being carried round a whole day unopened, were consigned to a similar fate. At last the one-sided correspondence ceased. Occasionally the old overseer dropped into the sitting-room, to

inform his young mistress that Master Klaus had written, and was desirous that this or that should be done in a certain way and attended to promptly. On such occasions Anna Marie generally assented with a silent nod, and the man after waiting a few moments, quietly retired.

“Nothing goes right any more. No one seems to take any interest in things nowadays,” he casually remarked to me, “it used to be that the Fräulein showed so much concern about the least trifle, that many a time I felt bored and wished her far enough away; but now, let things go as they will, she is perfectly indifferent. I verily believe that even if the well-filled barns and cornbins were to walk off bodily, it wouldn’t affect her in the least. Why, her brown mare stands in the stable and is growing fat and stiff from over-feeding and lack of exercise, and Fräulein never so much as inquires about her.”

It was too true; Anna Marie had lost all interest in her surroundings and sunk into a listless apathy. It was distressing indeed to look at her; her fondest hopes had been chilled and blasted, just as they seemed about realized. She had been robbed of all her heart esteemed most dear, and in her deep agony of soul now wandered hopelessly and aimlessly around, indifferent alike to joy and sorrow.

“Diversion! she needs diversion,” exclaimed the doctor. Looking at him in astonishment, I replied, —

“Doctor, you have known my niece from her child-

hood; you surely understand her sufficiently well to feel that the trifling merriments and gayeties which form pleasant pastimes for most young girls would afford her no pleasure whatever, and could never divert her mind from any trouble."

"Diversion," repeated the old man, "after all, she is only a girl, and just like other girls; she should marry, that would soon make it all right. It would be a perfect shame to allow her to develop into a sour, embittered old maid."

Sorrowfully, I shook my head.

"Patience alive, then! Why is she so unreasonable as to grieve and fret in this way over her brother's wedding? He is the one most deeply concerned, and if he's satisfied, why can't she be, too? She surely has one consolation: he couldn't have any trouble in managing such a doll of a wife. Anna Marie is foolish to make her hair gray over the matter. Pack her trunk, Fräulein Rosamunde, and take her away. Berlin would be a good place to spend two or three weeks. Let her even dissipate; I don't care if you take her to see a good play every evening in the week. Anything at all, only get her away from here."

"But, doctor, you do not understand my niece."

"Nevertheless, I want to make an experiment."

I told her everything; she listened calmly to me, and replied, "I care nothing about the outside world, I am happy here, and do not feel the loss of its attractions. I am not complaining. Only let me remain where I am and do not worry me."



As the workmen came, one after another, to commence the extensive alterations ordered in the bridal apartments, as the dear old furniture was removed, piece by piece, and the paper torn down, my niece fled to her own chamber. The secretary at which her father had so often sat and worked, was, at Klaus's expressed wish, not to be displaced, but the poor old thing presented such a ludicrously awkward appearance in the midst of the modern, artistic furniture, that the paperhanger and decorator risked his displeasure and removed it.

Anna Marie, with a fresh stab in her heart, had it carried to her own room. Every day, now, she would sit for hours at her mother's sewing-table, and gaze mournfully out into the cold, desolate garden, shuddering at each fresh stroke of the workman's hammer. The bunch of keys was no longer suspended from her waist, Mrs. Brockelmann had assumed the entire responsibility of the housekeeping.

These dreary, winter days brought few visitors to Bütze; once in a while, Pastor and Mamselle Grüne dropped in, but she shunned even their society. I spent most of my time with her, watching with earnest sympathy and sorrow, the struggle of her proud heart. Not once did I hear a complaining or reproachful word; yes, I could not but think it would have been a great relief to us both had she indulged at least in an occasional sob or sigh.

From the beginning, Isabella had kept herself as secluded as possible, and shyly endeavored to avoid meet-

ing Anna Marie. But one day towards Christmas, she stepped into my chamber with beaming face, and informed me that the gnädige Frau had written for her to come at once; that she could no longer dispense with her assistance at her toilet, and had offered her the position of lady's maid. "*Je vais à Paris ce soir,*" she concluded, "and from there to Nice. Oh, I can speak French beautifully!"

I wished her a pleasant journey, sent greetings to Klaus and Susanne, and saw her take her departure; then reseated myself, and was soon lost in meditation. Klaus, the staid, comfort-loving Klaus, who enjoyed a quiet evening in his great easy-chair more than almost anything in the world, was going to gay Paris with a young wife, who found a lady's maid essential to her toilet. No, the two things did not harmonize. There was beyond doubt a discordant note.

In the room below, a most refined elegance was gradually unfolding, and I learned from the workmen that the pale blue, satin-glossed paper of the boudoir (the little library adjoining Klaus's study had been converted into a boudoir for Susanne), and the exquisite rosewood furniture had been selected by the gnädige Frau herself while in Berlin; that they had paid twelve dollars a yard for the crimson hangings in the *salon*, while the Smyrna rugs were genuine, and of the most costly kind. Tears rose to my eyes as I thought, where now is our dear, cosy, old sitting-room? Who in Bütze had hitherto known aught about Oriental rugs and bou-

doirs, except perchance what they had learned in some romance from a circulating library? But now they were actually here in our good old manor house, rendering it strange and unnatural.

One day, as Anna Marie had occasion to pass through the summer parlor, her foot sank in the soft, heavy carpet, and her eye rested on the low divans, which, with their gold-embroidered cushions, graced the different sides of the room; from the window she saw the substantial old tiles of the portico, over which her childish feet had so often pattered, and on which she and Klaus had so frequently played together, replaced by a floor of glistening mosaics, and the gray stone pillars superseded by an artistic iron railing. The sight proved too much for her. A quiver passed through her frame, and large tears rolled down her cheeks as she slowly turned her back on the modern magnificence. I noticed that ever afterwards, when she went into the garden, she avoided this way, and passed out through the lower story.

It was on a stormy March evening that Anna Marie first broke the long, painful silence to which we had grown somewhat accustomed. I had not seen her once through the whole day, and had been obliged to take my noonday meal in solitude; to my oft-repeated rappings on her door she had vouchsafed no reply, and yet I longed to whisper in her ear a few words of comfort and cheer, for this was her birthday.

In vain Mrs. Brockelmann had ornamented the de-

licious-looking cake with a dainty little garland of the earliest snowdrops; in vain placed upon the breakfast table a few clusters of fragrant, full-blown hyacinths. the door of her *sanctum* remained unopened. That morning I had received a letter from Klaus requesting me to hand an inclosed, unsealed note to his sister. It was a friendly, earnest petition for reconciliation, and an entreaty that she would write him at least a few lines. "What a miserable home-coming it will be for Susanne and me," he wrote, "if these unhappy misunderstandings are not forgotten! We on our side are ready, not only to forgive, but to forget, if you will receive us with outstretched arms, and greet us with sisterly affection. I do hope you will make a special effort to be friendly to my wife. I can assure you sincerely, that I am pining to return to my loved home, and my regular rounds of duty; a life such as we are now living has no charms for me. You know I could never content myself to be idle. As far as I can judge, Susanne's health has been greatly benefited by our travels; but she, too, is in need of rest, and at this time would particularly enjoy the quiet and comforts of a home. With heartfelt wishes for your happiness and welfare, let me express once more the fond hope that ere long we may be enjoying, as in those happy bygone days, the sweets of brotherly and sisterly love." Within lay a dainty visiting card, on which was inscribed, "Susanne, Baroness von Hegewitz," and beneath the name a lightly scribbled friendly greeting.

In his letter to me, Klaus referred repeatedly to his longing desire to return to Bütze; pleaded with me to try to induce Anna Marie to forgive and forget, adding that his coming back depended entirely on his sister's feeling towards them; that at present he would not permit Susanne to be unnecessarily excited or subjected to unfriendly treatment, and yet it was her fervent wish, for this as well as other reasons, to return not later than the beginning of spring.

The two epistles lay before me; how could I acquaint Anna Marie with their contents? She positively refused to read his letters, and how would she receive the news of his intended return? Even the intimation of this joyful prospect could hardly be hoped to work any change in her feelings.

Mrs. Brockelmann had complained to me with deeply concerned countenance that Anna Marie had eaten nothing all day, and it was now nearly four o'clock. "She is making herself old before her time," she added, mournfully, "she looks five years older now than she really is. Would you believe it? yesterday when I was brushing her hair, I found that it is beginning to turn gray, and just think how young she is!"

In the dim, mysterious shadows of that evening twilight, Anna Marie unexpectedly stepped into my chamber. She uttered no word of salutation, greeted me with no friendly good evening, but simply said, "Aunt, please do not mention to any one that this is my birthday;" adding, after a pause, "things cannot remain as they are,

Klaus will soon be returning, and I shall not be needed any longer in Bütze. I have been pondering over the matter for some time, trying to decide what will be best for me to do, and have finally determined to enter Stift B—— (a home for elderly aristocratic ladies), I know I am young, but, despite that, am perfectly willing to go.”

“Anna Marie!” I remonstrated, “such a step would drive Klaus to distraction, you must be careful not to go too far. I know both of you are stubborn and self-willed but he has been the first to make any concession, and he has again — here, read what he has written, I am sure this letter will make a difference in your feelings.”

I made a light and thrust the letter into her hand. As she hastily perused it, the color rushed into her pale face and shaking her head she said, seriously, “Believe me, aunt, I am persuaded that he would rather have me go, than find me here on his return. Please write and inform him of my intention. If we avoid meeting, it will be impossible for us to disagree.”

“Anna Marie! you intend — you could actually go away from Bütze?” I cried, reproachfully. “Is it possible? Really, I gave you credit for more feeling, greater affection for your old home; I did not think you capable of such heartlessness!”

After a momentary silence, she replied in a strangely agitated voice, “Baron Stürmer is coming back next month, and I would rather not see him. I should like to be as far away as possible.”

Springing up I threw my arms around her neck, and



in tearful accents said, "My poor, dear child, forgive me."

And she carried out her resolve and went! On a fresh lovely morning in early April, the carriage which was to convey her to her future abode, drove up before the door. Cloudless and blue the heavenly arch spanned itself across the newly budding earth, and the sun's bright rays lovingly caressed the tender young leaves on the stately lindens. A lark, warbling forth its melodious strains of thanksgiving, soared proudly heavenward till lost to mortal ken; while in the large front hall sat three young girls weaving garlands of evergreens, to decorate the arch about to be erected in honor of the return of the lord and lady of the manor, who were expected the next day. The faces of the busy, trim-looking maidens were radiant with joy, and a golden sunbeam reflected its glory on the grey old walls.

Anna Marie descended the steps, closely followed by the housekeeper, while the overseer and chambermaid stood beside the carriage. After warmly pressing the old man's hand, and bidding Mrs. Brockelmann an affectionate farewell, she stepped quickly into the waiting vehicle and drew her dark veil over her saddened countenance. I could not see her parting look at the old homestead, but feel certain it was one of inexpressible sorrow and regret. "Be sure to give Klaus my love," she whispered, as she bade me adieu, "and tell him I wish him and his wife all possible happiness!"

With these words she was gone, and I slowly wended



my way back into the house. Everything seemed unnaturally strange and lonely, as I wandered through the newly-furnished apartments. A cheerful fire was blazing in every room, and all the windows were thrown open. Everything was cosy, inviting, elegant, in striking accord with Susanne's beauty; but the old-fashioned comfort and tender associations of our dear old Bütze rooms, were gone, I feared, forever. Standing in Susanne's boudoir, my eye rested on the pale-blue portière which was drawn aside in a manner noticeably awkward; surely the *decorator* had not fastened it back in this way. Stepping forward, with the intention of arranging it more gracefully, I discerned, hidden behind its heavy folds, a small, old-time wooden cradle, on whose strangely shaped headboard was carved the Hegewitz coat-of-arms. Its awkward form seemed strikingly out of place in the midst of its handsome surroundings. Its tiny white lace pillow was adorned with blue bows, and peeping out from under the lounge was a basket, in which I found stored the daintest of infant wardrobes. One glance at the indescribably neat, fine hemstitching and exquisitely woven lace, convinced me it was the work of my dear niece.

"Anna Marie!" I whispered, as with moistened eyes I again gazed on the old cradle, in which she and Klaus had slept their peaceful infant slumbers, and which her fond sisterly hand had now placed here as a peace-offering to the wife who had robbed her of all life's joy and sweetness.

Two days later found our quiet Bütze in a state of unprecedented commotion. Unfortunately, one of my severe headaches kept me a prisoner on the sofa in my darkened room and prevented me from receiving the young couple and welcoming them back as I had desired and intended to do. But even in my seclusion, the sound of the bustling stir and activity, reached my ear. I heard an almost incessant ringing of the bell to summon a servant (a thing heretofore of rare occurrence in our household), the constant opening and shutting of doors, and such a confused hurrying to and fro, that I buried my aching head in the thickest pillow I could find, vainly hoping to secure a little rest and quiet.

Shortly after his arrival, Klaus came up to see me, and seating himself by my bedside held my hand affectionately in his, while he talked with me.

“You are glad to be home again?” I remarked, cheerfully, “how is your little wife?”

“Very well indeed,” he responded, “she is napping now. Everything seems unnatural, aunt, but I daresay I shall soon grow accustomed to it. There are so many changes that it feels almost like a strange place, and then” — He paused, and, in a moment, added slowly, “but the worst of all is — not to see Anna Marie.”

“What incorrigible beings you two are!” I chided, “bend or break, but never yield, and yet you absolutely pine for one another and are indispensable to each other’s happiness. Poor, foolish creatures!”

After a short pause he sighed, “Well, I shall send for

my sister in two or three months, and insist on her returning home; but at present perhaps it is best for Susanne to be alone."

"You have been leading rather a gay life have you not?" I asked.

"Painfully so," came his quick response, "you see everything was new to Susanne; she was completely carried away by the whirl of excitement, and never wearied of the gayeties and flattering attentions she received. I can't tell you how thankful I am to be home again with you once more! How do you think the house looks in its new garb? Don't you consider the furniture and decorations very handsome?"

"Beautiful, Klaus, some of it is really exquisite; but, to be candid with you, it suited my fancy far better before, when it was plainer and more cosy and home-like."

"Susanne is charmed with it," he continued, "but for my own part, I acknowledge, I felt a touch of homesickness when I stepped into the different rooms, and found the old-fashioned stoves no longer there to greet me with their cheery blaze. A pang shot through my heart when I saw my father's substantial old secretary displaced by a dainty writing desk, and I missed the familiar sight of Anna Marie's spinning-wheel. I confess I felt a little gloomy. Why," he added with a forced laugh, "I actually dread to take a seat in these frail-looking chairs for fear of a general break down."

"Will you be able to take supper with us?" he in-

quired kindly. I promised to do so if possible and suggested that if he would leave me alone a little while, I might perhaps get a nap and be able to go downstairs.

Towards evening a new ringing of bells aroused me from my light slumber; again I heard the slamming of doors and sound of steps hastening hither and thither. For a moment I thought some accident had occurred, but suddenly recollecting that I had heard the same noises during the afternoon, rose, made my toilet, and descended the stairs.

The first who came rustling and bustling against me was Mademoiselle Isa. Her sharp, agile little form arrayed in the most elegant of toilets, altogether too elaborate for a lady's maid, reminded one of a figure in a fashion-plate. She greeted me in the best of spirits and with a somewhat patronizing air remarked, "The gnädige Frau has taken a cup of chocolate and is feeling quite refreshed;" then, opening the door of the former sitting-room, now pleasantly lighted by two lamps, and pointing to the drawn portière, she added, "You will find the gnädige Fräü in her boudoir."

Feeling no little curiosity to see how Susanne bore her new honors, I limped quickly across to the curtained room in which she was lying. My feet sank so noiselessly into the soft carpet, that my step was unheard, and unobserved I entered the inviting apartment. The "gnädige Frau" was reclining on the divan, her glossy black locks flowing loosely over the blue pillow, while

her tiny lace cap, the symbol of wifehood, was pinned gracefully on the crown of her head. Her face was turned toward the low, open grate in which, despite the warm April evening, was a glowing fire. A hanging lamp threw a rosy light over the white-robed form, which lay there quietly as if asleep, the picture of comfort and content. How often as a girl she had thrown herself in just this way upon her sofa, and given herself up for hours to idle, happy dreaming.

“Susanne,” I whispered softly. She sprang up with a cry of delight, and throwing her arms around my neck exclaimed, “Aunt Rosamunde, dear Aunt Rosamunde, I am so glad to see you ;” and kissing me again and again, she stroked my forehead with the joy of a happy child. “My dear Aunt Rosamunde,” she murmured once more, and seizing my hand drew me down upon the sofa. Again I felt the old spell which she had woven about me in days gone by ; I had never been able to be cross to the child, for her charms had fastened themselves irresistibly around me, and captivated my heart and soul.

I raised her beautifully-rounded chin and looked into her face. It was the same sweet, childish countenance, rendered more charming by a slight pallor, and a strangely sad expression round her daintily-arched mouth. The eyes had lost their pleading look, but I fancied they were larger and more luminous than ever. Again she clasped me in a loving embrace, kissed me, laughed, shed a few tears, and then laughed anew, Susanne was still the same, one moment a blaze of sunshine, the next a

threatening cloud; ever variable, but always charming. No wonder that Klaus lay at her feet in blind, almost idolatrous adoration.

She chatted gayly about Nice, told me what they had seen in Paris, and that she expected to remain here only a short time, then once more threw her arms round me and lovingly whispered her heartfelt thanks.

"No, no," I said, smilingly, "I deserve no credit for that; you must thank Anna Marie."

She grew pale and speechless, then suddenly sprang up and drawing me into the *salon* showed me the hundreds of things she had brought home with her; useless ornaments, bric-a-brac, fans and innumerable indescribable trinkets, of whose very existence I had hitherto lived in blissful ignorance. "I made Klaus buy them all," she cried, joyously, "all but this one, aunt, do you see?" and pointing to a charming shepherdess of finest *sévres*, added, "that was a gift from Baron Stürmer."

In astonishment I asked, "Did you meet Edwin Stürmer?"

She did not respond to my earnest look, but with countenance gleaming with a tint, vivid as that of the rose-colored bows on her white dress, said softly, "Yes, we spent a whole day with him in Nice, but he left us very abruptly, and this is a philopena." Then she described the calm, blue Mediterranean, the graceful southern palms, spoke of their lovely moonlight trips in the gondolas, and told me she had sung far more beautifully than I had ever heard her, till her cheeks glowed with excitement at the delightful remembrance.



“How beautiful life is, how very beautiful!” she exclaimed, “and” — Klaus’s entrance prevented the completion of the sentence. He wore a short coat and high boots, and his face beamed with joy at being able once more to renew his accustomed activity.

“I have been going the rounds of the fields, making a tour of inspection,” he said, cheerfully; “and am all tired out, and ravenously hungry and thirsty; do you know, little wife, what I should enjoy more than anything else?” He stroked the dark ringlets back from her brow, and kissing her, continued; “Some genuine Westphalia ham and a glass of good German beer! Those French sauces were miserable stuff — bah! Hallo there!” he called to some one passing the door; “isn’t supper nearly ready?”

He appeared not to notice the cloud that flitted over his wife’s face, as he insisted that it was unnecessary for her to make any change in her toilet for supper, and to be oblivious to the fact that it was with no small degree of reluctance that she laid her arm in his. “We are going to have solid comfort and enjoyment out of our home life, are we not, my treasure?” he asked, beseechingly, holding her hands tightly in his; “we are not going to live as if we were in a hotel. When we return to Nice, I promise you always to appear in full dress, but here I have no time for such constant, useless changes, and as you are concerned, darling, you couldn’t look more charming in your handsomest state robe, than in this simple white dress.”



With a merry toss of her head and a warning shake of her finger, she remonstrated: "Wait! do you remember what you have promised me?"

"Oh, yes, in the future," he insisted; "but for the present, you will surely let me enjoy the comfortable home life of which I have been so long deprived, will you not, my love?"

Susanne's reply was a rippling laugh. Klaus disposed of the ham with a hearty relish and refreshed himself with the longed-for beer, while Susanne ate her tempting little sandwiches, and drank the cup of tea which her husband himself had prepared to suit her fastidious taste. In amazement I watched how carefully he stirred the cream and sugar, and how closely he studied her face that he might anticipate her every wish, reaching her now the pepper and now the salt, cutting a fresh little sandwich or daintily preparing a sardine, freeing it from every bone and constantly asking, "Is this just as you like it, Susanne? Are you satisfied with the rooms? Are the flowers in the halls in accord with your taste?" Untiring in his attention, he treated her like a spoiled little princess.

Shortly after supper, I begged to be excused, supposing that after travelling they would feel tired and desire to be quiet. Susanne, who was again reclining on the lounge, rose to kiss me good-night, and Klaus accompanied me to my room. I noticed he held a book in his hand. "Good-night, Aunt Rose," he said; "I am going to read to Susanne."

“Read to Susanne!” I exclaimed, “what are you talking about, my boy; you are yawning already!”

“Yes, I am unusually tired,” he responded; “but Susanne is accustomed to it, and does not like to miss it. She rarely goes to sleep before one o’clock.”

“Klaus, Klaus,” I cried, warningly, “if she is really accustomed to that, the sooner you cure her of such a bad habit the better. Just think, if you must rise early in the morning” —

Unwilling to hear anything further, he interrupted me and laying my hand in his asked in joyful accents, “Aunt, isn’t she a lovely little wife?”

Smiling, I gazed into his face. “She is very fascinating, Klaus!”

“And who prophesied that I would be unhappy with her?” he queried.

“Not I,” was my earnest rejoinder; “but if Anna Marie entertained such fears, they were not without foundation, for a home-loving, domestic wife, Susanne will never be!”

“No, I am aware that she is not a German housewife,” he continued, evidently a little toned down; “but she is very young and she can easily — I feel sure she will become one.”

“I sincerely hope you are right; sweet sleep, Klaus” —

“But, aunt, don’t you think so?” he inquired, drawing me back; “won’t you write and tell Anna Marie how happy we are with one another, and how good and charming she is?”

“Yes, my boy, but now I must bid you good-night.”

Anna Marie's letters were brief and concise; her chirography large and angular, as it is to-day. She wrote me that she enjoyed good health, had a suite of neat, comfortable rooms, and spent much time with the abbess, who had been a friend of her mother. “I miss the activity which I once supposed indispensable to my welfare; a life of indolence, reclining in easy-chairs, with the society only of those who chat and knit—knit and chat, and take no enjoyment in books, is, according to my ideas, a miserable sort of existence.” In a post-script she generally added a greeting for Klaus and Susanne.

I always answered promptly, taking care to mention that Klaus seemed no less enamoured than formerly, and that apparently they were very happy together.

“God grant it may continue,” she replied, laconically. To her it seemed incredible that any one could be happy with Susanne.

Baron Stürmer, whom Anna Marie had supposed would return in April, was still abroad, and like a bird of passage, ever on the wing.

The long, dreary winter now gave place to a May of unusual beauty and splendor. The trees shot forth the freshest and fairest buds and leaves, the plants bloomed with unwonted luxuriance, and Bütze, fairly white with blossoms, looked like a sea of snow. The sun smiled from the blue expanse above, and Susanne, leaning on Klaus's arm, frequently wandered up and down the

well-kept garden paths, enjoying the delights and beauties of spring. Occasionally, she would come down alone, and in a light, airy summer dress, her straw hat tied bewitchingly under her chin, and a little parasol in her hand would pass through the garden across the fields to meet her husband. Her appearance was the signal for a momentary suspension of work; the maidens and women courtesied and the men saluted her more profoundly than they did any other member of our household, while groups of children flocked around her at every step merrily exclaiming, "Gu'n Tag, gnädige Frau," and often I could hear her joyous, laughing response. Every one was captivated by her charms.

Before long, she would return carrying a great bunch of wild flowers and leaning on the arm of her husband, who held her parasol in one hand and his horse's bridle in the other. As they entered the house, the walls of the old hall would echo the sound of her sweet prattle, and of his sonorous voice calling her by a thousand endearing names.

"If Anna Marie could only see them now, could she refuse to be reconciled?" I wondered. Poor lonely Anna Marie!

Susanne never inquired for her. Her whole being was absorbed, her whole time consumed in a variety of insignificant trifles. It was no rare occurrence nowadays to receive a shower of visitors in one afternoon, and on such occasions the merry laughing and chattering in the summer parlor never ceased until the evening

was far advanced, and poor Mrs. Brockelmann worried and wearied with preparing and serving the refreshments.

“I am hardly able to stand up,” she sometimes complained, “I must get some one to help me. Once upon a time they gave us notice beforehand, if they wanted a big supper, and if visitors dropped in unawares, they had to take whatever was at hand. But I don’t dare to set the gnädige Frau down to even the choicest sliced ham and fresh eggs and a dish of herring salad. Oh no, I tried it once, and I’ll never forget how scornfully she turned up her nose and excused herself to her guests! After tea, the master slipped out and said, ‘Dear Mrs. Brockelmann, even if it should be a little late, I wish when we have company you would give us a warm supper and cook us a fowl, and this and that; my wife does not like a cold meal when we have strangers; and have you no asparagus or young peas?’ Heaven and earth! And then tired out as I am, I run my feet off to accomplish what seems impossible. Dear, oh dear, what would Fräulein Anna Marie say if she could only see my pantry and account book?”

And rubbing her hand through her hair, she shook her head dubiously.

“Yes, yes, you can believe it, Fräulein Rosamunde,” she generally added, “I could put up with the gnädige Fräu, she doesn’t trouble herself much about me, but the old —! She is more than I can endure. She sticks her nose in everything, and brings the chocolate back a

dozen times, complaining it is not hot enough, or it is burnt, or the dear knows what! As if the old wretch understood anything about it! Then, just as my patience is about exhausted, down comes Master Klaus and says, in the friendliest way possible, 'Dear Mrs. Brockelmann, try to get along with Isabella, so as not to worry my wife.' Then I daren't say a word, for any one can see how bad he feels, when anything annoys his wife. Dear, dear, sometimes I get disgusted when I think that notwithstanding all his love for Anna Marie, he has been so cross and ugly to her, while for his wife — why, he would stretch out his very hands for her to walk over!"

Truly the old woman was not far wrong! He did hold out his hands for her little feet, and she stepped upon them, without so much as noticing on what she was treading! Unbounded was Klaus's devotion to Susanne, and she accepted his love coolly, as a tribute due her, little realizing the value of the priceless boon she possessed.

I am unable to say whether or not he was sensible of this, but I know that sometimes when Susanne was napping, or absorbed in making an elaborate toilet, or perchance, had gone off on a pleasure drive, when he had a little leisure time, he would come to my room, with a tired, troubled look, and seat himself on a low stool, by my side.

At such times he often spoke of Anna Marie, a name rarely mentioned in Susanne's presence, because it never



failed to cast a shadow over her sunny countenance, and silence her prattling lips.

“My dear old Anna Marie!” he would say, “she is still angry with me, and yet she is such a good, sensible girl.” Those last words were always pronounced with a peculiar intonation. “Wouldn’t it be delightful if she and Susanne could live together like two happy sisters — oh, that unfortunate stubbornness! Aunt, do you think she will come back, when in the room below, the old cradle —?” And his eyes would dim with tears at the very thought.

“I do not know, Klaus, but I sincerely hope so,” I tried to say by way of comfort, “if Susanne can forget” —

“Yes, aunt, all my hopes for both of them are centred on that cradle. I have determined that Anna Marie shall be godmother, I will not permit it to be otherwise. Oh, how I wish it were all over!”

And at last it was all over! One sultry August night I sat in an armchair by my chamber window and watched the vivid flashes of lightning which illuminated the heavens, and lighted up the roofs of the old barn. The air was close and suffocating, and my heart throbbed with anxiety as my thoughts wandered to the room below. I feared and prayed for Susanne.

What thousands of memories surge through the soul in such an hour! Trembling joy, happy anxiety, fond expectations! Every moment an eternity! I listened to the soft, hurried coming and going, to the gentle



opening and shutting of doors ; would no one ever come up to announce the good news to me ?

Then I seemed to live in the past. My thoughts reverted to the night when Anna Marie was born, when I had sat in this same chamber, waiting with even greater fear and dread. Yonder, in the armchair, Klaus had fallen asleep, and I allowed him to rest on undisturbed till his father came to summon him to his mother's deathbed. Even yet his pale, alarmed, boyish face rises before me with peculiar vividness, and I still see him kneeling before the cradle of his baby sister.

A solemn quiet reigned in the garden below ; no sound broke the stillness save the watchman's measured tread, as he paced slowly to and fro ; the clouds were dispersed, the mist cleared, and over the slumbering world glittered the bright firmament. luminous with thousands of twinkling stars.

Suddenly my attention was arrested by the sound of hurried footsteps nearing my room, and ere I could compose myself, Mrs. Brockelmann called out, " A boy, Fräulein Rosamunde, come downstairs — a lovely, beautiful boy ! "

Never before did I descend that staircase so quickly ; never before did Klaus clasp me so wildly in his arms and greet me with such a demonstration of joy and thanksgiving, as he led me to the cradle of his firstborn son. The great, strong man was overwhelmed with happiness, and the first word he whispered to me was, —

“Won’t Anna Marie be glad?”

No little stranger ever received a warmer welcome into this world than did Klaus’s boy. His presence worked a magic change in us all; even Mrs. Brockelmann and Isabella were friendly to-day. In the latter’s heartfelt anxiety about her darling, she stepped from her lofty pedestal and relinquished her place at the bedside of the young mother, to the more experienced and skilful Mrs. Brockelmann. And it would have taken a far harder, more unrelenting heart than our faithful old housekeeper’s, to refuse to rejoice with the happy father over his new-born heir. Whatever dislike and grudge she may have cherished against Susanne, to-day blotted out, and with a genuine womanly tenderness she waited upon and cared for her. And did it prove otherwise with me. No, I too, crippled old Aunt Rosamunde, knelt between bed and cradle, and kissed again and again the sweet, pale countenance of the mother and the chubby cheeks of the infant boy. All the troubles and grievances she had wrought in our family were forgotten in that hour. Klaus went immediately to the secretary and wrote to Anna Marie.

“Do you think she will come?” he inquired, earnestly, as he returned to the room, “I have despatched the letter by a special messenger to B——. Oh, I wonder if she will come!”

“Certainly, Klaus,” I responded.

After three days the messenger returned, with a note from Anna Marie. It contained warm, sisterly greetings

and congratulations, with here and there a word almost obliterated by tears. She wrote that she would be here shortly, probably in a week or two, and asked if his wife really wished to see her.

When Klaus stepped in, bringing this letter, I was sitting by Susanne, upon whose toilet Isa had bestowed special pains to-day ; bright ribbons lighted up her pale countenance and restored, temporarily at least, some of their wonted glow to her whitened cheeks. With a fond mother's pride she held in her arms the precious wee bundle of lace, fondling and caressing it, and inquiring with the gravest interest what color we thought would be most becoming to the little prince. She was quite vivacious and droll, and laughed outright when his majesty puckered up his tiny face into every conceivable and inconceivable variety of grimaces.

"Come see," she called to her husband, "whom do you think he resembles? Come look at him!"

We stood and gazed at the little man with becoming admiration, lauding in the most approved style his cunning baby ways and tricks. Mrs. Brockelmann, however, who chanced to pass through the room at this moment, exclaimed, —

"Yes, gnädige Frau, the first minute my eyes fell on him, I saw he was a regular Hegewitz ; he is the living image of his Aunt Anna Marie."

Susanne shrank back as if grossly insulted, and kissing the tiny hand whispered, "Never mind, darling, it's not true." Neither her look nor words escaped her hus-

band's ear; his cheeks crimsoned and a touch of disappointment overshadowed his brow, as he quietly placed the folded letter in his pocket. Seating himself by Susanne he kissed her hand, but refrained from mentioning his sister's name.

What reply Klaus made to Anna Marie's epistle I never learned, but more than once he remarked, —

“Anna Marie is always right; she is a thoughtful, good girl; she was wise not to come home immediately, as I wished.”

## CHAPTER XVII.

The next three weeks glided rapidly by, and once more Susanne was able to wander up and down the gayly tessellated piazza and watch Isabella as she strolled along the gravelled garden walks, carrying the blue-veiled infant to get the benefit of the fresh air and warm, health-giving sunshine. About six o'clock on a rainy evening, at the close of those three weeks, the dear, familiar form of my niece stepped unexpectedly into my chamber.

“Anna Marie!” I cried, in joyous accents. “My dear old girl, are you really back in Bütze? I am delighted to see you.”

Throwing her arms around my neck she rested her head lovingly on my shoulder, and murmured softly, though I could hear her broken heart beats, “Yes, aunt, but be careful, I should like to see Klaus alone first, we have so much to say to each other.”

Ere I had time to reply, he rushed in exclaiming, — “I saw you coming through the garden, Anna Marie,” and fondly clasping her hands in his, added, “thank God you are back again!”

The next moment she hung weeping on his neck. Realizing the sacredness of this hour of reconciliation, I noiselessly withdrew.

“And Susanne?” I soliloquized, as I proceeded to the

*salon*, where the ringing laugh of the young wife fell upon my ear. She was entertaining some lady visitors, and Isabella had just entered the room with the babe in her arms. The unceasing expressions of admiration and congratulation prevented me from informing her of Anna Marie's arrival.

At last, however, the callers excused themselves and we two were alone. Taking the child into her own arms she began playing with its tiny pink fingers and toes, then fondling and caressing it carried it up and down the long room.

"It's a shame," she chided herself, "that I do not know a single cradle lullaby! I don't like those airs they sing here about geese and black and white sheep; but, after all, what difference does it make, he'll never understand one word of it."

Then softly she commenced the sad refrain, —

"I've returned to my home, but there burns in my heart,  
A longing desire once more to depart" —

"Susanne," I interrupted, "Anna Marie is at home."

She seemed rooted to the spot; in the deepening gloom of the twilight I could not distinguish her features, and she spoke not a word. "Susanne," I repeated reproachfully.

Just then Mrs. Brockelmann appeared with a light and announced, gleefully, "Mr. Klaus is coming with Anna Marie, gnädiges Fräulein; oh, won't she be delighted to see her little nephew!"

Hand in hand, Klaus and Anna Marie entered the room. One could see the latter had been weeping, weeping bitterly, though her face now wore a happy smile. She went directly to Susanne, who had dropped into the softly-cushioned armchair by which she had been standing.

“Let bygones be bygones,” pleaded the earnest voice of Anna Marie, “and let us live like sisters.” Then kneeling beside her, she tenderly kissed the slumbering child, whispering, “he is very dear to me already.” The next moment her tear-stained face was uplifted to Susanne’s and with an entreating look she raised her lips for a kiss, as the seal of mutual forgiveness, but the young wife deliberately yet firmly, turned away her head.

Anna Marie sprang instantly to her feet and cast a reproachful look at her brother.

“Susanne,” he said, advancing to his wife and taking the child out of her arms, “Susanne, shake hands with Anna Marie. I wish you to be reconciled to her.”

Hesitatingly, she extended her right hand, coolly touched the tips of her sister’s fingers, and hurrying from the room despatched Isa to bring her the child.

“Why, oh why did I come back?” moaned Anna Marie.

With long strides Klaus paced uneasily up and down the floor. “Make allowance for her, Anna Marie,” he entreated, “she is not strong yet, she is still nervous — I will talk quietly with her when we are alone.”



“Klaus, Klaus,” repeated the girl, sorrowfully, “when? — I do not wish to make trouble in the family. She is your wife, you are happy, and I — I must leave you.”

“But this is your home, Anna Marie, your father’s house, you have as much right here as I,” he responded bitterly. “God knows I never dreamed it would be such hard work to make peace between two women.”

At this juncture, Isabella appeared on the scene, and informed Klaus that his wife wished to see him. He immediately started for her chamber, and in a few minutes we heard his loud, quick accents and Susanne’s weeping.

“I shall leave Bütze to-morrow evening, aunt,” said Anna Marie, and I noticed her pallid countenance and saddened eyes had assumed their former determined expression. “I did not return to disturb the peace of this household.”

My heart overflowed with pity for the poor girl! I understood how difficult it had been for her to make the first advances to Susanne, and fully realized what a struggle it had cost her proud nature; I knew how, even at last, it was only intense, unselfish love for her brother that had caused her to yield, and gain the victory over herself.

Our attention was attracted by approaching footsteps, and soon Klaus entered, leading Susanne by the arm. He took his wife’s hand and, laying it in that of his sister, said, with a sigh, “I want you both to forgive and

forget what has happened, and kiss one another, and be friends. The old troubles are never to be mentioned; remember, I positively prohibit it."

The kiss was given, though it proved little more than a formal touching of the lips. We all seated ourselves, and, after much difficulty, Klaus and I succeeded in starting a general conversation. Anna Marie related some pleasant incidents of her life in Stift B——, though her voice trembled, and more than once she was obliged to pause to suppress the rising tears; Susanne offered scarcely a remark, save in reply to some query of Anna Marie's in reference to the boy, or to answer a direct question of her husband's. Mrs. Brockelmann, who came in to announce supper, asked abruptly, "Is Anna Marie going to take charge of the house again?"

"I am not going to remain here, Mrs. Brockelmann," she answered, with a sorrowful smile.

"We shall see about that," was Klaus's quick rejoinder; "first, we must attend to the christening, and after that I have a great deal to talk to you about. It is really formidable to think of the things that need attention! Everything has fallen behindhand. No, indeed, there is too much to keep you at home. You cannot run away from us again in that style."

"When is the baby to be baptized?" I inquired.

"Oh, we have hardly discussed the matter at all, have we, Susanne?" he asked, turning to his wife.

"No, but it must be very soon," she asserted. "Isa says it is not proper to wait longer than four weeks."

“Just as you think best,” responded her husband joyfully, still hopeful that later developments would make it pleasant for his sister to remain at Bütze.

And she remained, but her decision to do so was brought about in a way vastly different from what he or any of us had anticipated.

The next morning, when Anna Marie entered my room, I noticed for the first time the great change in her appearance. Her fresh, girlish look was gone, her round, full face had grown long and slender, and deep lines furrowed the corners of her mouth. After the first greeting, she was very quiet, but stood and peered thoughtfully out of the window into the beauties of that early autumn morning. “Have you seen the baby this morning?” I asked, cheerily.

“No,” she replied, “Klaus wanted to take me into the room, but Isa insisted that Susanne was not through with her toilet. I heard him testing his voice, however.”

“Have you spoken with Klaus about the baptism?”

She nodded assent, and whispered: “Monday; Susanne wants to make it a great festivity.”

“Poor Mrs. Brockelmann will be almost frantic again,” I returned; “and Klaus won’t relish it very much either, but what difference does that make?”

“What difference?” asked Anna Marie, in astonishment. “He should assert his rights as a man, and say, ‘no.’ Merciful heavens! has she so bewitched you all, that you are willing to submit to her word as law? Every one of you, even Mrs. Brockelmann, seems com-

pletely under her control. She has you trained like little poodles, ready for any performance the moment she raises her finger?"

"Anna Marie," I exclaimed, "do not allow yourself to talk so: she is still weak and she" —

"No, no," she rejoined; "she is unreasonable. It is really terrible here! What has become of our dear old Bütze? Where is its former system and regularity? It's all helter-skelter; everything goes topsy-turvy, and it makes not the slightest difference, provided the 'gnädige Fraü' is suited and not kept waiting, The rights of master and servants are equally disregarded; every one is satisfied, if only the Madame smiles approvingly. I wish I had never returned."

"Anna Marie," I asked; "are these your good resolutions?"

"Don't be alarmed," she responded, with quivering lips; "I have bitterly repented the one time I forgot myself; I will never do it again, but I cannot stay in my father's house with things managed in this way. The worry would be more than I could endure."

At this juncture Klaus entered the garden gate, lifted his eyes to the first floor, and kissed his hand to some one above. I suppose Susanne was standing with the child at the window.

"Klaus looks ill," observed Anna Marie; "has he been well?"

"I think so," I responded, "at least, I do not remember that he has complained."

"Complained," she repeated, "as if Klaus would ever complain!"

But after all, that very day he spoke of not feeling well. When we met him at the breakfast table, I noticed immediately how observant Anna Marie had been. He looked miserable, and remarked, as he saw his sister watching him with troubled countenance, "I have a severe headache."

Susanne paid no attention to the remark, but said, coaxingly, "Klaus, you mustn't forget to bring me the Chinese lanterns! You know we are going to illuminate the garden, day after to-morrow."

"I would gladly get them for you, Susi," he replied; "but I have no one to send. If you had only mentioned it earlier, Frederick could have attended to it, but Mrs. Brockelmann has already sent him to the city, and I'm afraid I couldn't spare any one else from the harvest. We must use the little good weather we are now having."

"But, Klaus, you knew that I wanted them," she said, pouting. "I was looking forward to that evening with so much pleasure, I thought it would be lovely to see the garden all lighted with the gay lanterns."

Wearily leaning his hand on his head, he said, "Forgive me, darling; in the multitude of things I have to think about, it slipped my memory, but never mind! I promise to see that you have them yet."

"Have you written the invitations, Klaus?" queried the young wife, persistently.

“Yes, indeed; I did not neglect that, I wrote them early this morning, they are on the way now, and you shall have the lanterns to-morrow.”

“To-morrow?” she asked, in a tone of disappointment.

“Well, if my head feels better, I might ride over this afternoon,” he replied.

Anna Marie remained speechless, lowered her eyes and looked at her plate. Before Susanne had finished eating, Isa brought in the child. “Oh, give him to me,” begged my niece, with beaming eyes. She rose, took him in her arms, and carrying him to the window gazed long and lovingly into the baby face.

“He resembles our family, Klaus; his nose is like yours, and he has your good, honest eyes.”

Isa had hurried away. There was a great bustle and stir in the formerly quiet house. The rooms and halls were being swept, the furniture beaten, but everything was confused and disorderly. The old-time system and quiet seemed to have fled forever. At last Klaus rose, and stepping to his sister said, “Would you be kind enough to help me figure up some of my accounts? it is necessary to do it at once.”

“Certainly,” was the joyous answer, “but can’t you wait till you feel better? must it be done to-day?”

“Yes,” he responded, “I am anxious to get affairs settled up, and in better shape than they are now; my headache, I suppose, will pass away before long.” I relieved Anna Marie of the child, and brother and sister stepped out together.

Klaus excused himself from appearing at dinner, preferring to lie quietly on the lounge. When he came to supper his face was flushed and feverish. Anna Marie looked at him and said anxiously, "You mustn't get sick, Klaus."

Smilingly he replied, "Perhaps the ride to the city will do me good."

"Nonsense," cried my niece and I simultaneously, "it is folly to think of such a thing!"

"Oh, that won't hurt me," glancing tenderly over to Susanne, who was reclining on one of the low divans, toying with the bows on her dress. She vouchsafed no word of reply; never suggested that if he was suffering with headache it really made no difference about the lanterns, that after all, it was only a foolish, childish fancy of hers; she did not kindly inquire, "Are you really feeling so unwell?" No, she maintained a sullen silence, and Klaus soon left us to order his horse.

"Susanne," entreated Anna Marie, with difficulty suppressing her emotion, "do not let him go. He is not fit to leave home, he should really be in bed." Her words betrayed deep anxiety, but Susanne coolly rejoined, "He is his own master, he can do as he chooses."

"Yes, but you know he is only going to please you, if he gets sick you will never cease to reproach yourself."

Susanne indulged in one of her rippling laughs and exclaimed, "Klaus sick! How comical! It's absurd to make so much ado over a slight headache." Then trilling a familiar melody, she stepped into the adjoining



room, and we soon heard her call from the window, "Good-by, Klaus."

"Poor innocent child," I said, seizing Anna Marie's trembling hand.

"Heartless!" she responded, and stepped down into the garden.

Klaus did not return until the afternoon had deepened into evening.

"The package will be here soon," said he to Susanne, "Stürmer has it. I met him in the city, he had just returned by the Lüneberg stage."

"Stürmer?" she queried, delightedly, "did you invite him to the christening?"

"Indeed, I never thought of it."

She threw her arms round his neck and begged, "Oh, write to him, won't you? Come, be good and say yes. Please do." Then with a sudden start she exclaimed, "Why, you are dripping wet!"

"Yes, it rained heavily for nearly two hours; but, Susanne, you will excuse me from writing any more to-night, won't you? I really do not feel able. To-morrow will answer, will it not, darling? I want to rest now." He kissed her white forehead and retired to his chamber. I noticed that notwithstanding his face was flushed, his body trembled as if in a chill.

Thankful that Anna Marie was not present, I hastened to inform her that Klaus was feeling very unwell and had gone to lie down. In the meantime, Susanne hurried to the secretary, and with a happy smile took up her pen.

I found Anna Marie in her room. When I told her about her brother she made no immediate response, but in a moment whispered, "Poor Klaus."

"Stürmer is back again, my child," I continued. She shrank back, compressed her lips and we sat silently side by side, in the darkness, till roused by Mrs. Brockelmann's voice saying, —

"Gnädiges Fräulein, it would be much better if you would see to Master Klaus yourself; the gnädige Frau," lowering her voice, "seems to know nothing about sickness. She sits and chatters away to him like a magpie, and I know he ought to be quiet."

Anna Marie sprang up quickly, then slowly reseated herself and in a pleading voice said, "Aunt, won't you go to him?"

"Gladly," I replied, "but I thought you should go yourself."

"I?" she asked, in a tone which pierced my heart. "I? no, it is better that I should not go, I could not refrain from saying what I feel."

I found a blaze of light in Klaus's chamber, and Susanne sitting by his bedside prattling away in an uninterrupted strain. On the nearest chair lay her pale-blue silk robe, richly garnished with lace; the toilet lights were burning brightly, and the lamp standing on the table threw a strong glare on Klaus's flushed face. He held a handkerchief over his eyes and with almost every breath heaved a low sigh.

Without, I still heard the beating of furniture and

shaking of rugs, while from the *salon* opposite, issued the sound of the brushes and brooms with which the maids were waxing and polishing the floor.

“May I send the invitation, Klaus?” queried Susanne. “Would you let Frederick ride over, or send it by the coachman? You are sure the baron is at home? Klaus, why don’t you answer me? — dear Klaus, why don’t you talk?”

He nodded, and turned his head to the other side.

“Well, if you are going to be so dull and uninteresting I won’t try my dress on,” she pouted.

“My dear child,” I whispered, “do you not see that your husband is ill?” I removed the lamp and laid my hand on his burning brow.

“Oh, if I could only get a little rest?” he moaned.

“Susanne,” I suggested softly, to the thoughtless young wife, “wouldn’t it be better for you to go to your own room? Klaus is very feverish and needs rest.”

She looked at me incredulously, and asked, “Do you think he will be well to-morrow?” then turning to the sick man said, “You will be all right in the morning, won’t you, Klaus?”

“Yes, yes, darling, do not be worried about me.”

“Then I will go right out, so you can sleep. Good-night, Klaus!” she added, picking up the silk dress from the chair, and throwing it over her arm. She bent over, kissed his forehead, and disappeared, and in a few minutes we heard her silvery voice calling, “Isa, Isa, come here, tell Christian to ride over to Dambitz and

deliver this note to Baron Stürmer and wait for an answer."

Suddenly Klaus breathed a deep sigh. "Poor boy," I said, sympathizingly, "you feel very bad."

"I believe I am going to be ill," he whispered, "my head swims and I cannot collect my thoughts. Everything seems whirling round. Where is Anna Marie? Send for her."

"Call Fräulein," I said to Mrs. Brockelmann, who just passed along the corridor, "and try to have things more quiet." Only a few seconds elapsed before Anna Marie stepped to the bedside and took her brother's hand.

"My dear old girl," he said, wearily, "I am afraid I am going to make a great deal of trouble for you."

"Do you feel very ill?" she inquired, anxiously bending over him. Again he moaned, pointed to his head and said, "Try to keep Susanne from worrying about me."

Anna Marie's face paled, but without responding, she quietly began to make preparations for his comfort; cool, wet bandages soon eased his hot brow, and a glass of cold lemonade stood on the little table by the bed. The tired horse was again taken from his stall, and a messenger despatched for the physician. The house had grown very quiet. There was no sound even in the adjoining chamber. Susanne lay in her boudoir reading; not even aware that the doctor had been sent for. She did not hear the disconnected, wandering words of her husband, who was in a raging fever, nor see how devot-

edly his sister watched by his side, her blonde head resting on the high-backed chair, and her eyes anxiously riveted on her beloved patient.

Before the doctor arrived, Susanne was wrapped in tranquil slumber, and Isa, with noiseless step, carried the wakeful infant back and forth, that it might not disturb its mother's peaceful sleep.

Klaus was ill, very ill. The malignant fever gained ground so quickly, and struck him down so suddenly and powerfully that we were paralyzed with terror. Every one moved through the house on tiptoe; so softly and carefully were the doors closed, that not the faintest creaking was heard; the overseer had given orders to scatter straw thickly over the garden walks and drives to deaden the noise, and prevent the least sound from entering that darkened chamber.

Susanne peremptorily declined to believe that Klaus was dangerously ill. She tripped into the room with the child in her arms, and was surprised at the sight of the doctor by her husband's side, and Anna Marie's tear-stained face. Persistently, she refused to credit the sad truth.

"But he must not get sick," she cried, "he cannot be ill, and just at this time. Oh, Herr Doctor, it is too bad!" But when she saw the unmistakable evidence of illness in the vacant, unconscious look in her husband's eyes, she flew to the sofa and wept as if her heart would break. It was impossible, useless, to try to comfort her.

She sobbed and sighed as I had never seen her do, save on one other occasion. Isa was at her wit's end to decide whether she should first endeavor to quiet the screaming child or soothe the weeping mother. But not once did Susanne assert her right to watch at the bedside of her sick husband.

Towards evening the doctor made a second visit. The fever raged with unabated fury; indeed, seemed more violent than in the morning. Klaus talked of his child, and called for Susanne. Even in his delirium, his thoughts seemed to centre on his wife. Occasionally he seized Anna Marie's hand, pressed it to his lips, and in half audible tones, addressed her in the most endearing terms. He called her his darling, his wife, and Anna Marie fondly stroked his forehead, as tear after tear ran over her pale cheeks.

"Shall I send for his wife, doctor?" I asked. The old man shrugged his shoulders and replied, "No, as long as she stays away of her own accord, she saves me a great deal of trouble; I should only be obliged to send her out; she is still too weak."

I left to look for Susanne, and was informed by Isa that I would find her in the *salon*.

"Is she still crying?" I asked.

The old woman shook her head, and remarked, "Herr Baron Stürmer is there." Presently, through the drawn portière, I heard her taking a lively part in what seemed to be an animated conversation, and the next moment her merry laugh fell upon my astonished ear. At first

I had intended joining them, but my heart now failed me; I looked fondly at the peaceful infant, then with weary limbs and racked nerves, ascended to my room.

In the corridor my attention was arrested by a basket of garlands, near by which lay a bundle containing the coveted Chinese lanterns. The baptism had been announced for to-morrow, but our expectations were doomed to disappointment. All day long the coachman had been riding from house to house, countermanding the numerous invitations; the master was ill.

“O God!” I prayed, “shield us from further trouble; let not what we so much dread come upon us; O God, be merciful.” What would become of this poor child, and — of Anna Marie!

Seating myself in my armchair, I listened to the splashing of the rain, which the driving wind blew angrily against the windows. While lost in meditation, there came a gentle rap at my door, and ere I had time to reply, Edwin Stürmer entered. He seemed totally unlike himself, and I found it difficult to interest him in a conversation. Perhaps, I thought apologetically, he is feeling sad about Klaus’s illness. My fancy pictured him as I last beheld him, bidding Susanne and me farewell; again I saw the weeping girl, and remembered the letter he had written to me. To break the silence, I observed, “There have been great changes in Bütze since you were here, Edwin.”

For a moment he did not reply, then asked abruptly,



“How does Anna Marie get along with — with her sister-in-law?”

“Anna Marie?” I was embarrassed. Should I tell him they had not yet learned to understand each other? With some hesitancy, I at length replied, “She has been living in the Stift since Klaus’s marriage.”

He looked up in surprise, and murmured, “The old discord; surely, Anna Marie has never been in love; I have always said she was a strange character; there have been times when I thought she had a heart, but it was an illusion — only an illusion!”

“Edwin,” I cried bitterly; “you think you have a right to make such an assertion, but — you are laboring under a great mistake; perhaps it could be proved she has more heart than any of us.”

“It may be,” came his cool reply; “but she takes a strange way of showing it” —

And you, too; you too, Edwin! My poor Anna Marie! Could I only lead him at this moment into the sick chamber, could I only show him how, on bended knee, she waits and watches by her brother’s bedside, burying her sad, tear stained face in his pillow; could I but say to him, “See, there lies the key to all her incomprehensible conduct, which seems so mysterious and cold. No heart! she has too warm a heart, too much magnanimity! She has sacrificed the greatest happiness of her life for the sake of her brother, her only brother, who once made such a sacrifice for her.” could I only dare to prove —

Slowly the tears trickled down my burning cheeks.

“I did not intend to hurt you, Aunt Rose,” he said, tenderly; “I know I’m in a very unhappy mood. I had no right to come here at all, in such a gloomy state of mind. The desolate house has put me out of humor; an old bachelor should have no home; empty, cheerless rooms are all he deserves; he should have no company, but be obliged to talk to himself if he feels lonely. I realized it all fully; *ergo* I postponed my return from day to day” — Then, rousing himself, he added, “I am going away again; it will be best for me to do so.”

Observing him carefully, I noticed that he was greatly altered, and looked several years older. I knew not how to reply to his strangely bitter remarks. It was rarely that he indulged in such a sarcastic strain. After a short pause he rose, and taking my hand said, “I hope from the depths of my heart, Aunt Rose, that Klaus will soon recover; try not to be over-anxious; God will spare him longer, I trust, to enjoy the great happiness he has just given him.”

“God will spare him longer!” How often we poor mortals vainly strive to comfort ourselves with such words when, in our shortsightedness, we feel we cannot yet part with some loved one, whose life seems part of our own. “God will spare him longer;” we whisper it even when the very shadows of death are deepening, slowly, but surely, over the loved countenance. Such occasions we have all experienced, though they may lie far back in the misty past, like dark troubled clouds;

that they were terrible we still remember, though after a time we no longer realize the intensity of our agony.

The days crept on. Anna Marie had ceased to weep; her anxiety robbed her of even this comfort. Without a sigh or moan she performed her sorrowful duties, and like one long inured to keenest suffering, listened, speechless, to the delirious wanderings of her brother as he talked of Susanne and the child, always returning to Susanne.

At last a day came on which the physicians pronounced the mournful words, "No hope!" In the morning Klaus had rallied, and Anna Marie came out of the sick chamber with a face so radiant with hope, that my own heart beat high in sympathetic joy. She motioned for me to take her place at the bedside. He at once grasped my hand and asked, softly, "How is Susanne?"

"She is well, dear Klaus; would you like me to send for her?"

"No, no," he whispered. "She must not come, it might be contagious — but Anna Marie?"

"She will be back in a few minutes," I said, and scarcely had the words fallen from my lips ere she appeared in the doorway, as if conscious of his wish, and kneeling beside him, laid her cheek fondly on his outstretched hand.

"Anna Marie," he spoke in a troubled voice, "I feel the fever is already returning — my child, my poor little child" —

She started. "Klaus do not talk so — dear Klaus."

"It is strange," he continued in a whisper, "very strange, but somehow I cannot see Susanne distinctly any more; but I can hear her laugh, yes, she is always laughing; even when I cover my ears, I can still hear it plainly."

Anna Marie glanced at me pitifully, then whispered softly in her brother's ear, "I will take care of the child, Klaus." He pressed her hand. His eyes glowed with fever, and he sprang up excitedly as a silvery laugh resounded through the room; yes, it was Susanne's, perhaps she was playing with the boy. The next moment the door stood ajar, and through the opening we heard a sweet voice inquire, "How is Klaus to-day? Is he better?"

Anna Marie ventured no reply; her eyes were fastened on her brother, who had again sunk back exhausted, and was nervously playing with the silken coverlid.

I hastened across to Susanne and whispered, "He is no better, my child; the fever has returned." An earnest, perplexed look overshadowed her countenance, and she softly closed the door, muttering in a tone of disappointment, "It's always the same; he's never any better."

Towards evening, Stürmer called again, arriving almost simultaneously with the two physicians; Susanne sat in her boudoir reading, but laid aside her book with a sigh of relief at the announcement of his arrival. He entered hastily, and in a somewhat tremulous voice, said

sympathizingly, "I'm sorry to hear Klaus has not been so well to-day."

Susanne extended her hand, remarking, "Sometimes better, sometimes worse. No one seems to understand his case; even the doctors themselves do not know what to say. Anna Marie is so dreadfully anxious she cannot judge, and it's the same with Aunt Rosamunde; sometimes they have doubts of his recovery, but he won't die so easily as that, will he? I know by experience, I have been delirious, I" —

But she said nothing more, for our old family physician stood unexpectedly before us. One glance at his face revealed to me what he wished to say — there was bad news about Klaus.

Susanne offered him her hand and stepped to the bell to ring for wine. Isa entered with the babe and presented him to the old gentleman. "How is my husband?" inquired Susanne, "better — is he not — than one would suppose from Aunt Rose's and Anna Marie's funereal faces?"

He gazed at her in silent amazement, then said slowly, "Gnädige Frau, it is all in God's hands. He can help when human help is of no avail."

Susanne sprang from her chair and the color faded from her cheeks; with a terrified expression, she riveted her eyes on the old man's face, as if endeavoring to decipher his meaning, and as the sad reality dawned upon her, she tottered, and would have fallen to the floor, had not Edwin Stürmer supported her in his strong arms.

"Is there really no hope, doctor?" he asked involuntarily, as he carried the young wife to the lounge.

"His life is fast ebbing away," responded the doctor, busying himself with Susanne.

She remained unconscious only for a moment, recovering with a loud cry; then followed a wild outpouring of all the passion existing in this frail form. She wept and wailed, fell at the doctor's feet, and begged him not to let Klaus die. She couldn't live without him! She wrung her hands and sobbed piteously, but not a tear moistened her eye; then springing up she threw herself over the cradle of her child, lamenting in wild despair, "I do not want to live if Klaus dies, no, I do not!"

"Do not allow yourself to become so excited, try to be more quiet," counselled the old doctor, deeply affected, "think of your child, control yourself for his sake, he" —

"I made him sick," she cried, in a voice full of self-reproach, "I sent him to the city in the rain, although he told me he wasn't well. It's my fault, I am to blame if he dies!" Nervously she tore the lace from the sleeves of her morning gown as she paced up and down, charging the Almighty with cruelty in removing her husband, and begging to die herself. Isa quietly lifted the cradle in which lay the sleeping babe and bore it to another room, while Doctor Reuter poured out a few drops of some narcotic and urged Susanne to take it immediately.

She rudely pushed away his hand, exclaiming between

her sobs, "If your medicine is of any use why doesn't it save Klaus? Oh, if I had only nursed him myself, but they wouldn't allow me to go near his bed, and now he is dying."

"Susanne be reasonable!" I said, sharply, as Doctor Reuter significantly shrugged his shoulders. "What kind of behavior is this when a human life is trembling in the balance! *then*, surely there should be peace," I added with tearful eyes.

She subsided, not at my words, however, but at the presence of Anna Marie who had just entered the room.

"Come, Susanne, we will go to Klaus," she said in a faint voice. "The doctor told me that before he died, his reason would probably return, and he would be conscious for a few minutes, at least. His last look will seek your face Susanne. He has loved you so dearly" —

Passively she allowed herself to be led along, but a deathlike pallor crept over her face. As they neared the door she shuddered, suddenly tore away from Anna Marie's grasp, glanced back at us in alarm and called in a terrified voice, "I cannot see him die; oh, I cannot"

Anna Marie stopped and cast a compassionate look at the poor creature who had fallen on her knees before her, and recommenced her bitter wailing and lamentations. Then, without speaking, she passed on and returned to her brother. Once more Susanne was carried to the sofa, where Dr. Reuter and Isa did all in their power to calm and soothe her.



Preparing myself for the solemn scene which I knew must soon take place, I followed Anna Marie and was in turn followed by Edwin Stürmer. The peculiar look he threw at Susanne as he left the room, made an impression on my mind which time can never efface.

In the adjoining apartment, through which we were obliged to pass, stood the cradle; alone and unwatched slumbered its little occupant, blissfully ignorant of the dark wings of the Angel of Death hovering so near him. "No hope, no hope!" What despair lies hidden in those few words!

I did not remonstrate in the least against Edwin Stürmer's accompanying me to Klaus's deathbed; I did not even wonder at his desire to do so; it seemed only right that the oldest and best of our family friends should claim this sacred privilege. We found Anna Marie kneeling by the bedside with folded hands, waiting eagerly for his last look.

A solemn stillness pervaded the house; every one stole noiselessly about, and before the front door, groups of farm hands and day laborers, with their wives, stood gazing up at the windows with anxious, tearful eyes. Edwin Stürmer sat opposite me, partially hidden from view by the heavy draperies; he leaned forward supporting his head in his hands and intently watching the pale face of Anna Marie, whose head rested wearily on the pillows. I could not distinguish his features, though I heard his labored breathing, and occasionally a long, deep sigh. I am not aware that Klaus ever again gazed

on his sister with conscious eyes, for I could not see either of them distinctly. But even in these last moments, I heard him call more than once: "My child — Susanne!" then whisper, in accents peculiarly tender, reminding one of days long since departed, "Anna Marie, my dear — old — girl!"

At last came a lull, a cessation of even these broken utterances; a solemn, deathlike stillness pervaded the room, unbroken by aught save the low ticking of the clock; the intense quiet caused me to start. I stepped to the bed and saw Anna Marie still kneeling, clasping her brother's hand, her blonde head pressed in the pillow by his side.

Seized by a fearful presentiment, I advanced towards her as she rose to her feet, sobbing in choked voice, "My only brother." Again and again that bitter wail, "My brother, my only brother," pierced like a shaft, my aching heart.

Softly the door opened and looking up I saw Stürmer step out, his hand covering his eyes, although it was dark in the chamber, so dark, gloomy and desolate.

As, many years ago, Anna Marie had received the sacrament of baptism by the side of her deceased mother, so to-day this sacred rite was administered to our baby boy by his dead father's side. In the same spot where, scarcely one short year ago, the minister had united the young couple in the holy bonds of wedlock, stood, to-day, the silver-mounted black coffin, almost covered with

flowers. The large folding-doors of the *salon* were again thrown back; the rich crimson glow of the setting sun fell through the open casements, causing the light of the numerous wax candles to pale before its effulgence, and casting a warm, rosy tint upon the pallid countenance of Anna Marie, whose face was bent low over the child in her arms.

The long white robe of the infant contrasted strangely with the heavy mourning attire which enveloped the tall figure of the sorrowing aunt. I stood close by her, and laid my hands fondly on her fatherless little charge; at the other side hovered Isa, clad in an unseemly profusion of black crape. A large concourse of sympathizing friends had assembled in the room, but I no longer remember who they were; of all the faces there, only one now looms up before me, that of Edwin Stürmer.

An easy chair had been placed in a comfortable position for Susanne, but she sat in it erect and motionless, as if petrified by the intensity of her suffering and grief. Strange indeed, the sight of this child in widow's weeds! She had ceased her wild lamentations, having wept and sobbed till utterly exhausted; but now and then large teardrops rolled slowly down her marble-white cheeks. The dark blue rings which encircled her eyes seemed to enhance their lustre, and render them more luminous than ever. With her tiny hands folded on her lap, listening to the words which fell from the lips of good old Paston Grüne, she looked a veritable picture of hopeless despair.

Every eye in the room was moist, and we heard many bitter sobs from the sympathizing crowd without! Solemn and impressive were the aged minister's words, —

“Once before,” he said, “I baptized an infant in this house under similarly distressing circumstances.”

A quiver passed through Anna Marie's frame, but she resolutely compressed her lips and forced back the unbidden tears; for a moment she drew the babe closer to her breast, then carried it to its widowed mother. Even yet I see Susanne holding the infant boy on her lap, as the aged servant of the Lord laid his hands upon her head and invoked the divine blessing upon mother and son; she bent her face so low that the black veil almost hid her and the child from the gaze of surrounding eyes.

As Pastor Grüne stepped to the coffin and slowly commenced the funeral sermon by pronouncing in clear tones the full name of the deceased, I saw Isa step quickly across the floor — Susanne had fainted. They carried her tenderly to her chamber, while a murmur of sympathy ran through the assembly. “I fear she will never recover from this shock,” some one behind me whispered, “poor young creature — she is not much more than a child! It has been a terrible strain on her whole system. If it only doesn't affect her reason!”

No one seemed to think of Anna Marie.

No one whispered in her ear a comforting word; all the sympathy was reserved for the widow, so young, so charming, and so sorely bereft. Every one knew of the

unpleasant relation existing between the sisters-in-law. They thought of Anna Marie as cold and proud — and idly wondered what was to become of Susanne without her natural protector.

My poor, misjudged Anna Marie! If they had seen you a little later in the dark shades of evening, by the fresh grave; if they had found you, as I did, prostrate with sorrow and distress, kneeling on the cold, damp earth as if you could not tear yourself away from the flower-covered mound under which your brother, your only brother, lay sleeping his last long sleep, — could they have refrained from granting you at least one word of consolation?

## CHAPTER XVIII.

UNSPEAKABLY sad were the weeks which followed, — weeks in which we first began to realize fully what a loss ours had been! We missed his friendly words, his happy smile, his mild, gentle manners. Every moment it seemed as if the door must open and his cheery voice inquire, “Well, Aunt Rosamunde, how are you getting on? Where is Anna Marie?”

Anna Marie! The entire responsibility of the domestic management now rested upon her shoulders; the whole burden of Klaus’s business and closing up of the estate devolved upon her. She found no time for useless mourning and regret. She drove to the lawyer’s, carefully examined letters and papers, and with trembling hands settled accounts; if occasionally so overwhelmed by a sense of her irreparable loss, that she was constrained to pause in her arduous tasks and bury her face in her hands, she would suddenly recollect the cares resting upon her and wearily resume her labors.

Susanne’s mourning was of a vastly different style. She fled to her boudoir, but must have some one always at her side. She dreaded the clear, sunshiny days, so out of accord with her dejected spirits. Towards twilight she was generally troubled with asthma, or suffered with palpitation of the heart, and Isa was obliged to

read aloud to divert her mind from her weaknesses ; she could not be prevailed upon even to pass through the corridor after dark, nothing in the world could have induced her to do that. Her boy, who had been called Klaus in memory of his departed father, was never addressed by that familiar name ; she called him Hänschen, her darling, her treasure, all she had left in this wide world, and yet she would start back in alarm from the cradle over which she had thrown herself, and cry out in a terrified voice, "Oh, he looked at me just like Klaus ; he is the very image of his father."

Then, from far and near, came our numerous friends and acquaintances to pay visits of condolence. Susanne with a woebegone, broken-hearted aspect, received them in the *salon*. Her charming face was surrounded by graceful folds of black crape ; the point of her widow's cap overshadowed her fair brow, and her black-bordered handkerchief was always bedewed with tears. Sometimes she held the child in her arms, and a more touching picture could scarcely be imagined than this child-like widow holding her chubby baby boy.

Anna Marie was never present on such occasions ; at the announcement of visitors she fled to some sequestered nook in the garden, not reappearing till the carriages had rolled out of the grounds. She treated Susanne with the most thoughtful tenderness, murmuring to herself, "He loved her so dearly, so very dearly !" She endeavored to shield her from everything disagreeable, tried to cheer her by devising pleasant little



surprises, prepared for her many a choice delicacy, and adorned her room with bouquets of her favorite flowers:

At Susanne's expressed wish, Baron Stürmer was appointed guardian of her child, and the selection of this old family friend was heartily concurred in by Anna Marie.

It was November. The cheerful lamp was burning in Susanne's boudoir and she, clad in a deep black gown, was reclining on the divan, her head resting on the blue satin pillow. Now and again she cast a cursory glance at the book in her hand, occasionally gave a slight cough and then quickly raised her handkerchief to her lips. I was paying my customary evening visit and making inquiry about herself and the child. "Hänschen is asleep—thank God," said Susanne; "he is with the nurse in the next room, it is more quiet in there." Isa was bustling around the grate, stirring the fire, for it had grown bitterly cold and from our windows we could see that the roofs were fringed with icicles. On the table beside Susanne lay a piece of embroidery already begun and a large pile of gay zephyrs. Inviting and cosy beyond description was the appearance of the little room. Who in the world could have wished a more delightful retreat from the winds and the snows without?

"Where is Anna Marie?" I inquired, after an exchange of greetings.

Susanne shook her head, and letting the book sink into her lap replied, "I really do not know."

“Fräulein Anna Marie is in her brother’s room,” chimed in Isa, “Herr von Stürmer has just gone away.”

Susanne’s eyes flashed. “Why didn’t he come in and see me?” she asked. Then slightly raising herself she whispered, “Aunt Rose, I believe I am going to be ill, my throat is sore, I have a constant inclination to cough, and feel miserably. Dr. Reuter said some weeks ago, I could not stand these severe winters — but — what shall I do; oh, I cannot decide to go away and leave Bütze.”

“I understand your feelings, my child,” I responded, “I should not go were I in your place.”

Instantly her eyes filled with tears, and with a sob, she exclaimed, “No, I suppose it would make no difference if I were to die here!”

“Do not talk so, do not talk so,” I responded cheerfully, “you must live for your child; you are weak and worn out from your great trouble; winter will soon be over.”

At this moment Anna Marie entered, asking in a friendly voice, “Well, Susanne, how are you feeling?”

“I am sick,” she sobbed, “very sick. This room is so hot it nearly suffocates me. It affects my breathing, you must remember my lungs are not strong like yours.”

Anna Marie looked at her in bewilderment, and replied in a voice full of sympathy, “I am very sorry for you, Susanne.”

“Oh, if Klaus were only living,” she cried, “he would have taken me South long ere this.” Isa shook her head thoughtfully.

She had appealed to Anna Marie's weak side. "Dear Susanne," she said, tenderly, "if you feel it is necessary, I should advise you to go. I know you are delicate, and that you have a troublesome cough; let us talk it over with the doctor to-morrow, he can advise you as to the best place. Then we will pack you and the" —

"That's just it," cried Susanne, "I couldn't take the baby with me."

"And you never could decide to leave him?" queried Anna Marie in a choked voice.

"No, no," sobbed Susanne.

"Yes? could you?" continued Anna Marie softly, the blood mounting into her face, "you would not like to trust him with me I suppose" — she hesitated — "even if I should promise to attend to him myself and watch him day and night?"

Susanne ceased sobbing. "But why not?" she exclaimed, "it is Klaus's child; you loved him so dearly, I am sure you would take good care of it for his sake."

Anna Marie left the room and Susanne followed her. In a few minutes they returned and, for the first time in many weeks, I noticed a smile hovering over the mouth of each. Susanne longed to fly away from this desolate house of mourning, in which the snows and storms held her captive, and an additional duty devolved upon Anna Marie. She might now fondle and caress her dear brother's child without a restraint, and bestow upon him all the loving care her heart desired. This precious boy, on whom hitherto she dared not lavish her affection for

fear of exciting his mother's jealousy, was now to belong to her alone, and be under her personal care and supervision for an indefinite length of time.

"Will it not be too great a responsibility for you to assume, Anna Marie?" I queried anxiously.

She shook her head and replied softly, but decidedly, "Never, under any circumstances," adding after a moment's pause, "but do you think it is right to allow Susanne to go out into the world alone and unprotected? You know she was Klaus's pride, his joy, his last thought."

"Child," I said, "in her heavy mourning?"

And Susanne departed — with trunks and boxes and Isa. She was overwhelmed with grief at parting from her boy, and in the last moment wanted to tear off her hat and furs and remain in Bütze with her beloved child — then she stepped into the carriage. That she could not return before Christmas caused her no annoyance; she reasoned that it would be a very dull season this year, and would only bring up all her grief afresh. The doctor himself, when he advised her to go South, urged her to leave early for this very reason.

And thus we three, my niece, the child, and I, came to be alone in the dreary house. Without, it snowed and stormed, everything was crusted with ice; but within, Anna Marie's heart melted with tenderness, and the deep, fond love of her noble nature shone out from her large, expressive eyes. For hours at a time she would sit before the cradle, which stood in her room, and gaze

on the sweet, plump baby face of its tiny occupant, as if she could never weary of the comforting sight. Tears, bitter tears, would sometimes stream from her eyes, as she thought of her only brother, but these, too, were milder. Her new care helped to assuage her grief.

The newly-furnished apartments were darkened and closed; Anna Marie disliked the modern elegance of these rooms, and preferred the simple plainness of her own.

One stormy evening, shortly after Susanne's departure, Edwin Stürmer came to see Anna Marie. More than a week had elapsed since he had called before.

Mrs. Brockelmann did not announce his arrival, but, without any formal ceremony, showed him into Anna Marie's room. When he entered, she was kneeling before the cradle, laughing and playing with her little nephew, telling him in sweet, childlike language, about the blessed *Christkindlein*, and the innumerable joys and pleasures the happy Christmastide always brings.

The deep, strong love of which this girl was capable, manifested itself in every tone of her voice, as she poured forth words of ineffable tenderness. Yet how often had she been accused of having no heart, by the man who now stood in the doorway gazing at her as if in a dream!

On discovering his familiar form, she sprang up in embarrassment; her pale countenance instantly assumed its old proud, impenetrable look, and I fancied I saw



Edwin heave a deep sigh, as in her cold, stiff manner, she advanced towards him and extended her hand.

“It is so lonely in Dambitz,” he said, apologetically, “moreover, I wanted to bring you the mortgage from the mill : old Kräbe has begged so hard for an extension of time, that I think we will let him — or, if you think best not to do so, I will take it myself.”

She nodded assent, quietly responding : “Certainly, I should not wish to do otherwise. You know Klaus promised it to the man.”

He still held his hat in his hand, as he asked, “Do you object to my remaining half an hour or so ? ”

“If you do not find our dull society too wearisome, it will afford us much pleasure to have you,” and, excusing herself, she left the room.

“For heaven’s sake, Aunt Rose, tell me what is wrong now,” he said ; “why are you all sitting in here, and where is Frau von Hegewitz ? Surely, they have not disagreed again ? ”

“Susanne ? ” I responded ; “I suppose you are not aware, then, that she started for Nice some time ago. Her cough was troubling her again, and she dreaded the winter.”

He sprang up, and commenced pacing up and down the floor ; suddenly pausing before the cradle, and looking at the sleeping child, he said : “Did you allow that young creature to go off alone ? ”

“No, Edwin, Isa accompanied her.”

“Well ! ” he rejoined, “the powers of evil could have

selected no better person to — to ” — He resumed his restless walking, and continued it till Anna Marie entered followed by the nurse, who bore the little slumberer into an adjoining room. Quietly we sat round the table; it was almost as in days of yore; the old furniture from the sitting-room; the monotonous ticking of the clock under the mirror; Anna Marie at her spinning-wheel, and Edwin Stürmer, with downcast eyes, meditatively playing with a tassel of the table cover.

Suddenly he roused himself; from the corridor fell upon our ears the clear voices of the children, —

“O little bird Martin, with golden wings,  
That sweeter far than all others sings” —

“It is St. Martin’s day,” I said, looking across to Anna Marie. She made no response, but immediately drooped her eyes; Edwin cast a peculiar look at her; what did he mean? Unexpectedly, Anna Marie, the proud, heartless Anna Marie, covered her face with her hands, and left the room in tears.

“What is wrong, Edwin?” I asked, and failing to call forth any reply. tapped his shoulder with one of my long wooden knitting needles. The incomprehensible man rose, stepped to the window, and looked wistfully out, without uttering a word.

“Marieken! Marieken! open the door,  
Which the waiting youngsters are standing before.  
Simmerling, simmerling — leaf of the rose,  
Pretty maiden, pity our woes!”

rang out the familiar refrain.



Slowly and quietly the uneventful winter crept along its monotonous course; we were not destined, however to be much longer alone, for with the buds and blossoms of returning spring, Susanne also returned. Anna Marie had ordered the best carriage to be driven to meet her, and arrayed the boy in one of his daintiest white dresses; the dining table was profusely ornamented with flowers, and by Susanne's plate stood a large bunch of handsome white roses. I went to the door to welcome her, while Stürmer, who had chanced to drop in, remained in the *salon* with Anna Marie holding the child in her arms.

Fresh and charming as the newly budding spring, Susanne alighted from the carriage and fell upon my neck. "Here I am again, dearest aunt, here I am again," she called, "how have you all been, and how is my darling little boy?" She flew up the steps as gracefully as a bird, the laces and flounces of her elegant mourning fluttering in the breeze; then rushed through the hallways at such a pace that I could scarcely keep up with her, and was soon in the *salon*.

The boy was comfortably resting in the arms of his fair aunt. He had grown a good deal, and his curly flaxen locks fell in ringlets over his brow, giving additional charm to his lovely baby face. With one hand, he clung to Anna Marie, and with the other reached cunningly for Uncle Stürmer's watch. His delighted mother, in an ecstasy of joy, tore him from his aunt, pressed him to her heart, and covered him with kisses.

But his infant majesty did not relish this gushing demonstration. He failed to recognize the strange lady who had taken him unawares, and with a pitiful cry, stretched out his arms to Anna Marie.

Susanne, vexed and embarrassed, resorted to her usual remedy and wept, lamenting in heartrending tones that she had lost the love of her precious boy. A painful scene followed. Stürmer slipped into the adjoining room, while Anna Marie tried to console the poor mother. "You must not feel so, Susi," she said, "it could not be otherwise. He has not seen you for so long. Come, dry your tears, and listen to what he has learned."

And stepping before the eccentric little woman, she said: "Mamma, mamma." "Mamma, mamma," lisped the little man, now wholly comforted.

His mother smiled, and hastened upstairs to change her dress, promising to return as soon as possible. When she appeared at the supper table, her face had resumed its former cheerful aspect, and every trace of her recent sorrow had vanished.

In the days that followed, she manifested but little ardor in her attempts to win back the love of her child. She quietly allowed Anna Marie to care for him, and perform, entirely alone, the many duties she had so willingly undertaken. Occasionally, however, the fitful young mother would indulge in a sudden outburst of tenderness, and for hours refuse to allow her darling to be taken out of her arms.

The quiet stillness with which the summer dawned upon us was of short continuance; every day now brought groups of visitors, and Susanne's rippling laugh frequently resounded through the old rooms in tones painfully clear. The returning gayety was not in accord with Anna Marie's feelings, and she fled to the solitude of her chamber as soon as her ear caught the sound of a carriage rolling into the grounds, or heard the pacing of the horses as the grooms led them up the gravelled drives, after their riders had entered the house.

Stürmer was a daily guest, and indescribably strange, anxious forebodings stole into my heart, when I saw him ride through our garden gate.

"Herr Baron Stürmer is with the gnädige Fräu," announced Mrs. Brockelmann, one pleasant afternoon as she entered Anna Marie's room, where I was sitting by an open window. "The Herr Baron inquired for the boy, and the gnädige Frau, overhearing him, stepped out of the *salon* and laughingly insisted that he should step in and wait till she sent for the baby."

Anna Marie quietly lifted her charge from the floor where he was playing, kissed him and handed him to the old woman, saying, "There now, go to mamma, and be a good boy."

Then she resumed her work and was soon busily engaged in figuring up the long columns.

"Will you not go down, too, Anna Marie," I asked.

She shook her head, "O aunt, I have a great deal to do and — he will not miss me. He will be here now

very frequently," she added, a tell-tale flush suffusing her cheeks. "I believe they still love one another."

Half credulously I shook my head and exclaimed, "Why, Anna Marie, she is still wearing her widow's cap!"

"But it will come before long," she whispered, the lines round her mouth betokening mental torture; "then they will leave Bütze and take my boy with them and at last my cup of misery will be filled to the brim. That will be the crowning sorrow," she continued; "then I shall have nothing in the whole world I can call my own, not even a ray of hope."

Mournfully I looked into the face of my dear niece. How many hundreds of times had I myself dreaded that this would come — how often had this empty future haunted me — poor Anna Marie!

And her prophecy was partly fulfilled. Stürmer came frequently. We sat together in the summer parlor and enjoyed our afternoon coffee, and in warm evenings lingered till a late hour upon the cool, pleasant verandah. Susanne's vivacity and high spirits had returned. Again a white rose often shone out from among her raven tresses, and once more she cheerily looked over the garden, without noticing the spot at the foot of the hill where her recently deceased husband lay, cold in death. Sometimes I fancied I heard the wail of a dear familiar voice ringing in my ear, "Am I so soon, so soon forgotten?"

Anna Marie sat for consecutive hours holding the

child in her lap, amusing him in various ways, and trying to teach his baby lips to frame the word "father"; slowly and distinctly she repeated it over and over again, rejoicing with childlike simplicity at his first awkward attempts to imitate the sound and murmur the precious syllables. She guided his first infant steps, and scarcely permitted him to be out of her sight, carrying him around wherever she went, through the house and out into the garden. "Perhaps he may remember something about it," she said, "perchance, when he has grown to be a man, he may return to his early home — come back and live in his father's house; then he will be strong and noble like his father, and good and kind to his old Aunt Anna Marie."

Had Stürmer really serious intentions towards Susanne? I could not bring myself to watch, and even if he had, etiquette would not permit him to avow them, for it was not yet twelve months since Klaus had been laid to rest. But if they loved each other still, — and he *had* surely loved her as a girl, — there was no longer any obstacle in the way save her heavy mourning.

The day after the anniversary of Klaus's death, came a quick, nervous rapping at my bedroom door, and presently Edwin Stürmer entered; he wore a short hunting jacket and high boots, and appeared to have come directly from the chase.

"Dearest Aunt Rosamunde," he said, throwing himself as if exhausted into a large armchair, and wiping the perspiration from his forehead, "dear Aunt Rosamunde,

we are good old friends, are we not? think how long we have known each other—I have a favor to ask, a very great favor.”

“Of me?” I replied, with fast-beating heart.”

He looked pale, and threw his gloves carelessly upon the table. “I want you to speak a good word for me,” he said; “I am a coward, I don’t know what will become of me, if a second time I should be”—he paused.

“Are you so uncertain about yourself and your own affairs, Edwin?” I inquired. I thought of Klaus, I thought of Anna Marie, my dear old Anna Marie!

“Yes, I am very uncertain about my own affairs. Otherwise, I should not be here; no, long ere this, I should have been downstairs and had this old, unfortunate misunderstanding cleared up.”

“You are in great haste, Edwin,” I said bitterly; “Yesterday was the anniversary of Klaus’s death.”

“It has been a great cross to me to wait so long,” he returned, in a quiet tone. I looked at him in undisguised dismay. “Well, if you are unwilling to do it for me,” he exclaimed, hastily, “I must speak for myself. Where is Anna Marie?”

“No, no,” I begged; “for heaven’s sake do not do that; it would be the death of the girl. I will go, I will speak for you, if it must be!” And again burning tears coursed down my cheeks. “Tell me now, just what you want, what am I to say?”

For a moment he was silent, then, in broken accents, stammered: “If—if—ask her please—well after all

—I do not know — perhaps it would be best for me to speak to her myself.” And before I had time to tender my advice on the subject, he had hastened from the room.

I cannot explain how it happened, I only know I was deeply grieved and angry with him. He, who usually had so much tact and such refined feelings! . . . “Verily, love does make fools of even the wisest of mortals,” I said, grimly, wiping the tears from my eyes.

And now I presume we shall have to submit to another siege with this new engagement; again be discommoded by the inconveniences arising from the alternating vicissitudes of the mournful joys and blissful sorrows of another betrothal: yesterday, heavy crape; to-day, red roses!

Tightly I clenched my hands; not for my own, but for my dear niece's sake, did I grieve so bitterly; I feared it would be like a deathblow to Anna Marie. Love for Stürmer, I knew was deeply rooted in her heart, and could not be easily eradicated. She would overcome it, she would rise above it, but her youthful spirit would be forever crushed. She would have nothing (as she said) in the whole world that she could call her own, for Susanne would surely take the child with her. I wished to see and hear nothing further; threw my shawl round my shoulders and wandered into the garden.

The ground was thickly strewn with the first yellow leaves of fall; a fine mist enveloped the trees, and the



western sky was ornate with crimson and gold; it was a glorious sunset.

I looked across to Dambitz. The slate roof of the old manor shone brightly, as if gilded, and seemed to smile on me with a friendly greeting; the towering trees of the dark forest were plainly outlined against a background of violet, crimson, and gray. I stepped down the road leading to the little pond, and saw the dilapidated boat rocking in the clear water, in which the spreading oaks were beautifully reflected. Suddenly, my attention was arrested by a voice, proceeding from the grove behind me, and I instantly recognized it as Edwin Stürmer's. They must be near at hand.

"No, no; I cannot let you off again in that way," I heard him protest in pathetic tones. I turned, feeling as if I could no longer suppress my righteous indignation, but that my vexed soul must cry out in agonizing despair.

I retreated hastily and went directly to the bed of the child. I know not what impulse prompted me to do so, but it seemed as if I must go and look into that innocent face, to convince myself that love and truth still existed in the world. The curtains were drawn and by the glimmering night-lamp I saw the little fellow peacefully sleeping. The door to Susanne's room stood ajar. Suddenly, I started—the persistent tones of Isa's shrill voice fell upon my ear.

"You cannot postpone it any longer, my lambkin, don't you know that a person who has said A must also

say B? This is the third letter, and you cannot remain a widow forever. Come, now, don't make such faces. That, across yonder (pointing to Dambitz), will amount to nothing; if I am not very much mistaken, he has changed his tactics, deserted his colors and"— She evidently made some motion, then laughed outright.

The next moment I heard Susanne sobbing, "My boy, my boy!"

"But, darling, be reasonable, one cannot travel with such a young child; what would you do with him? It is far better for him to grow up and receive his education in Bütze; you know it belongs to him. Just think how few children are so highly favored! You can see him, too, darling, whenever you wish," she added, as Susanne renewed her sobbing, "You will have nothing to do but take this short trip. Don't be so dreadfully unreasonable; have you ever made a mistake when you followed old Isa's advice? Come, trust me." Then, after a momentary pause, she said, as a last inducement, "Do you want to live here under your sister-in-law's sceptre? I should think not!"

Instantly Susanne's sobbing subsided, and she replied curtly, "I do not know."

In excited bewilderment, I hurried through the summer parlor to the piazza. There they stood under the lindens. Yes, Anna Marie and Edwin were standing side by side, gazing over at Dambitz. The last lingering rays of the declining sun had colored the western heavens in such gorgeous tints that, involuntarily, my

weary lids closed over my dazzled eyes. Or were they blinded with tears of joy? Behind me I heard a low call, and turning I saw Susanne; she had laid aside her mourning and fastened a rose in her hair; her tears were already dried.

I took her by the hand and pointed silently to the happy couple under the linden. In astonishment she looked at them for a moment, then in subdued accents whispered, "Anna Marie?"

"And Edwin Stürmer," I added. She made no response, turned pale, but did not avert her gaze.

"They have loved one another for a long time, Susanne," I said, earnestly, "yes, long before you ever saw Bütze; Anna Marie refused his offer of marriage," — Susanne's eyes were riveted on my lips, — "she refused him, my dear, because she loved her only brother so deeply that she did not wish to leave him!"

She stood in speechless, motionless surprise, until Anna Marie and Edwin started in the direction of the house, — then turned and disappeared through the summer parlor. They came along the path like happy children, hand in hand, appearing as if they had been engaged for years, and as if no doubt had ever existed between them; their manner bespoke a quiet devotion, and was devoid of the gushing demonstration which often accompanies a first love. As they stood before me I saw in my dear niece's eyes a blissful expression such as I had never seen before. Fondly, she bent over and kissed my hand.

“Anna Marie made it right hard for me, Aunt Rose,” said Edwin, drawing the girl closer to him. “She tried to assume her mask of indifference and insisted that she could not leave Susanne and the child; but I was too sharp for her this time and refused to be imposed on again, didn’t I, Anna Marie?”

Very early the next morning, I heard a carriage roll out of the yard. I rang for Mrs. Brockelmann, who at once informed me that the gnädige Frau had gone away with Isa, but had left a note downstairs for Anna Marie, which would explain everything.

“Have you given it to her?” I asked.

The old woman nodded, and added sorrowfully, “There is something behind it all, I could detect it in Isa’s actions.”

Anna Marie entered in amazement, with the open letter in her hand.

“I do not understand it, dearest aunt, Susanne has gone to Berlin to meet some acquaintance from Nice.”

I shrugged my shoulders.

“She is vexed with me,” her pale lips whispered; “she loved him herself. O aunt, it is terrible!”

“No, no, my child,” I tried to comfort her, “do not believe that.” But she motioned me back, and with tearful eyes left the room.

Again a shadow had crossed her pathway and obscured her new happiness. With an uneasy feeling I followed her downstairs, and almost involuntarily stepped into Susanne’s boudoir. The room presented a picture of

the greatest confusion, things scattered indiscriminately here and there; in the haste of departure, dresses, fans, ribbons, crape, trinkets, and books had been left on tables and chairs; in the fireplace lay a pile of partially burned papers, some pieces of which had evidently fallen unnoticed and escaped the fate of the others; I picked them up and saw in bold handwriting the following:—

“I beg of you let me know for a certainty, at Berlin. There are no obstacles in the way, my darling, my love—in a short time—mine for ever.”

“Robin ——.”

For a moment I was dazed, and sat mechanically gazing at these words. By degrees the light dawned upon me, and I began to understand Susanne's late uneasiness, her distracted manner, Isa's secret planning and plotting, her words of yesterday, and their sudden departure. Susanne had gone,—gone, never to return; ere long she would be the wife of another, of a perfect stranger to us all, and our claim upon her would cease forever! And what had she left us? Yonder, in the garden, a grave, the remembrance of her beauty, a sweet perfume as of roses, which had always seemed to hover round her, and the memory of innumerable tears. But no—blessings, fond blessings rest upon her, for her child, the living image of our dear Klaus, she had left us forever!

I took the partially burnt paper and went in search of Anna Marie. She was sitting by the window, her eyes turned towards Dambitz. “Here, Anna Marie,”

I said, "this will convince you that your fears are groundless."

As she hastily perused it, the corners of her mouth twitched nervously, and an expression of pain overshadowed her face. "I am sorry for her, aunt! She fancies her happiness lies outside her duties and responsibilities, but she will find, too late, how grossly she has deceived herself. It slumbers yonder in that little cradle. When she becomes conscious of the mistake, it may be sooner, it may be later, she will return to Bütze; don't you think so?" she inquired, anxiously.

Suddenly, her face lighted up, Edwin Stürmer was coming through the garden. He had dismounted from his horse, and was leading it by the bridle. When he saw the familiar form at the window, he greeted her with a pleasant nod, and smilingly kissed his hand.

"Your lover, Anna Marie!"

A modest, maidenly blush tinged her cheek, and she whispered softly, "It's like a dream, aunt."

It was November, the day before Anna Marie's wedding, that a letter, bearing a foreign postmark and addressed in a man's handwriting, was handed me. Involuntarily I shuddered, as I recognized the large chirography and the peculiar flourishes at the end of each word; undoubtedly it was penned by the same hand that indited the note I found in Susanne's room.

Hastily breaking the seal, I discovered two sheets of paper. The one I chanced to take out first was a formal announcement of the marriage of the Frau von Hegewitz



*née* Mattoni to Mr. Robin Olliver of London. Heart-sick, I picked up the other.

“DEAREST AUNT,” greeted my astonished eyes, “pardon me that the first word you receive from me is the announcement of my marriage. Pardon me, one and all! I am not frivolous, I am not wicked, I have only longed for and sought freedom, which is as essential to my happiness as air to my life. My husband, with whom I became acquainted in Nice, is going to Brazil, and I gladly accompany him. I anticipate with joy the change from the old limited circle and wearisome routine, to a life in which I shall always find gayety and variety, and in which the weeks and months will not pass in dull monotony.

“I long, I pine, for my darling boy, but I have no right to take him with me over the sea; he belongs to his father’s house, and I am fully aware that I could not care for him more tenderly nor love him more devotedly than his Aunt Anna Marie. Pardon me, I beg you, once more; pardon me, and send me — it is the last request which I have a right to ask from the family bound to me by the tenderest of ties — a lock of my treasure’s curly hair, and teach him to cherish loving remembrances of his mother, and not to judge her harshly.

No signature, nothing further. Again I turned the leaf, not another word! I heaved a deep sigh, but nevertheless felt as if a weighty burden were lifted from my heart.

Now I must go and break the news to Anna Marie. But no, not to-day nor to-morrow; I would cast no shadow upon her unalloyed bliss. Towards evening I went downstairs; Mrs. Brockelmann informed me Anna Marie was in the garden, by her mother’s grave; with pride the old woman pointed to the altar which she had improvised in the *salon* for her *Fräulein*’s wedding. Everything was decorated with evergreens, and from



among the dark leaves peeped out innumerable shining wax candles.

“It is no great festivity, there will be no large concourse of people,” she continued, “only two or three old family friends. Anna Maria and he both wished it so, but I want to make it just as beautiful as if there were hundreds of invited guests.”

I went into my niece's chamber and stepped to the side of the cradle; calmly and peacefully the child slumbered, in blissful unconsciousness that his mother had voluntarily relinquished all claim to him and left him forever. (But, poor little fellow, you may sleep on in sweet content, undisturbed by harassing fears for the future, for you still have a mother, a true, warm-hearted, devoted mother, in Anna Marie!) The night lamp burned low; the wind had arisen and was whistling clear and shrill through the garden and forest trees. It seemed to come from over the sea as if to bring us a greeting from the mother of the slumbering babe, and its moods were as many and varied as those of Susanne herself; wild, weird strains alternated with plaintive wails; then its force increased and it drove the branches madly against the window panes; but its fury was of short duration, and once more it sounded so low and sweet that I could almost fancy its dulcet tones were those of some enchanting love melody. Quietly I stood in the niche by the window and listened to it—and the breathing of our precious boy.

Presently the door opened and Anna Marie stepped

quietly in. She did not observe my presence, but I saw that she had been weeping. She stooped down, bent low over the cradle, and kissed the child again and again; then with folded hands stood long by the side of the little bed, gazing fondly into the peaceful face of the infant sleeper.

Soon I heard footsteps in the neighboring room and a familiar voice call, "Anna Marie!" She flew to the door, "Edwin," I heard from within the joyful response. Long and confidently they talked together in suppressed tones, and when I left the room they were still standing by the window.

"Is this a *charivari*," I queried, jocosely, "alone in the dark, and no singing or music?"

Their reply was a hearty laugh. Suddenly we heard the ringing of the evening church bells, and from the adjoining room sounded clearly and distinctly a child's voice, crying, "Mamma, mamma Anna Marie!" In a moment my niece's arms were round my neck and her kiss upon my lips. "And you do not call that singing or music?" she said gayly; then bringing the child she placed it on the sofa between herself and Edwin Stürmer, and they spoke of their dear departed Klaus, of bygone days, of the future and their great happiness.

Anna Marie was the first to mention Susanne's name.

"She has not written for so long," she said, "I have had no reply to my last two letters; sometimes I wonder if she will come back, Edwin; she knows to-morrow is our wedding day."

“Susanne?” I interrupted, “no, Anna Marie, she is not coming back.”

“Have you heard from her, aunt?” they asked together.

“She is married and has left Europe, giving her child entirely to your care, Anna Marie.” In response the girl tenderly kissed the little orphan who had fallen asleep on her lap, and whispered with quivering lips, “Edwin, this is our wedding present from my only brother!”

So ended the manuscript, which it had taken three evenings to read.

The young man laid the sheets upon the table and looked into the earnest, deeply-interested countenance of his wife. “My mother died in America,” he continued, “mother Anna Marie came to me one day weeping, tied a crape ribbon round my arm and kissed me over and over again (we were living in Bütze then), and we went directly upstairs to Aunt Rosamunde, who wept also and kissed me repeatedly. She told me my mother was dead, but I could not understand her, because I saw Anna Marie before me, and my childish heart had never known, nor wished to know, any other mother.”

Fondly the youthful wife laid her hand in that of her husband and tried to speak, but words failed her. Unexpectedly the door opened, and a tall, stately figure stepped over the threshold.

“Mother,” they both called joyously, “mother Anna

Marie!" and the loving son clasped her in a warm embrace, raised her hand and pressed it to his lips.

"Good evening, my children," was her simple greeting as her mild eyes, shining under her snowy locks, wandered from one to the other.

"O you darling mother, how charming in you to come over!" cried the young wife, "how are father and the children?"

"Edwin is well," she responded. "and the children are looking forward with much pleasure to your visit next Sabbath."

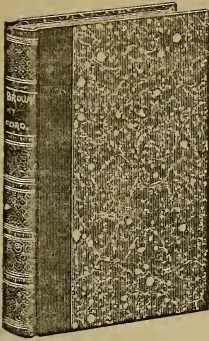
"And you, mother?"

"Well, I was longing for a glimpse of my oldest daughter and a sight of my only son," she said, heartily; "moreover, you know, this is St. Martin's evening."

Allowing them to take off her bonnet and mantle, she seated herself on the sofa. "What have you here?" she queried, turning over the loose sheets with great eagerness. As she read, a delicate flush suffused her benign face, and she whispered, —

"Those were sad times, but they have given place to very happy ones. When I have passed to my eternal rest and joined the dear ones gone before, add to this manuscript, —

"Anna Marie was the happiest of wives and the best loved of mothers."



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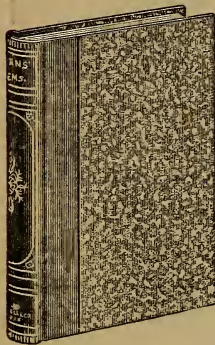
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